Remember 202 Hodgepodge

… the completely disorganized thoughts of an idiotic scientist…

by Dr. Joey Bone

Booklet two

Preface

Occasionally, someone will say that the finest literature is effortlessly thrust into the writer's consciousness, but I can assure you that nothing akin to such an experience occurred in the scribbling of this second tome, nor am I anything remotely resembling a writer of literature, and nor does this mess qualify as any form of significant 'art.' And although, I'd like to tell you that this mare's nest of hen scratch is true, or at least based on truth; unfortunately, it is all a complete fabrication; of course, in a way every piece of fiction is based on some amount of truth, since it's born from someone's brain circuitry, which is indeed real stuff. Nevertheless, please do understand that this is nothing but a poorly written, highly disorganized, unedited piece of trumped-up narrative. It's filled with boring redundancies and irritating segues, so if you enjoy a steady train of uninterrupted well reasoned thought, this is definitely not the book for you, ergo you might be better off putting it back on the shelf and looking elsewhere. Again, if you think you recognize anything, which might correspond to

reality, it is purely coincidental, nothing more; but that's not to say that coincidence can't be remarkable.

EVIL ORANGE

The joyous days spent at my Grandparents' newly (1954) acquired fun-filled beach house, were unexpectedly brought to a close, with the arrival of monstrous inky black clouds, replete with brilliantly flashing lightning bolts, and their corresponding earthshaking thunderclaps. The churning dark storm came rolling in from the south, low over the Gulf of

Mexico, blocking out the sun, and changing the inviting sparkling clear emerald waters, into a menacing iron gray, complete with large swells, topped-off with foaming windblown whitecaps. The ensuing torrential rains forced me indoors, with my ever irritating little Grandma, and her handy-dandy *Reader's Digest,* the black and white TV, with its' twelve inch round screen, housed in a fancy cherrywood cabinet. If my memory serves me, when you'd turn the knob clockwise to turn it off, the entire lighted display, of whatever you had been watching, would suddenly seem to compress into a thin white horizontal line across the screen, which would quickly shorten into a tiny white dot in the center of the screen, which lasted for about two seconds, before the screen went dark.

Strangely enough, in those days, people considered the wooden TV cabinet to be every bit as important, as the technology it housed. TV salesmen were always quick to point-out its' type of wood and the quality of its' finish. The cabinet often included doors, which closed over the TV screen, as if it needed protection. One could never be too sure that a bull wouldn't somehow get into the house. Oddly enough, many people did close those doors, when

they went to bed at night, as if somehow the TV screen would be attacked, during the night. Early TV sets invariably functioned poorly in bad weather, which left me saddled with Grandma's tedious conversation. I suppose that most people seemed to lack luster, after being raised by a highly intelligent combat pilot.

Back then, there weren't weather satellites, ergo there wasn't a dependable meteorological early warning system, so usually by the time the television station was aware that a hurricane was eminent, the power had already gone off, and massive amounts of destruction were already happening. As a consequence, the unforeseen hurricanes meant less preparation time, as well as no significant time for evacuation. With the lax building codes the massive storms tended to be far more ruinous and lethal; hence, much more terrifying. With an approaching hurricane, the last place a reasonable person wanted to be was anywhere close to the coast, where the force of the storm was apt to hit hardest. Generally, once a few miles inland, the power of the storm markedly diminishes.

With the ominous darkening skies, Grandma and Grandpa, as well as most of their neighbors along the

beach were convinced that a hurricane was about to lay waste to indigenous flora, fauna, as well as the various man-made structures. Since the foundation of the beach cottage was only about two feet higher than the water at high tide, the little wooden structure was likely to be smashed to smithereens and floated-out to sea, if there was even a moderate hurricane. (A few years later, that actually did happen.) Hence, it was Grandpa's decision to vacate the beach house, *post haste*. As the weather continued to deteriorate, my Grandparents literally flung their clothes, the perishable foods, valuables, books, paperwork, etc., into the car, closed the shutters, pulled down and locked the garage door, and locked-up the bungalow. Much to my dismay, the three of us piled into Grandpa's *Ford,* and hurriedly motored away from the enjoyable beach house.

One hour later, we'd returned to the extremely boring timeworn house in downtown Mobile, with its ancient tall rattily windows, no kids my age, and nothing to do but to look for bugs and lizards. The only saving grace about being in the town house was that I'd again get to see Bernice, Grandma's black maid, a warmhearted woman with countless stories about her friends and family, which included details

about gambling, shootings, stabbings, sex, robberies, etc., for which I'd been repeatedly sworn to secrecy. The loving older black woman was prone to gossip, yet her gossip didn't involve condemnation or harsh judgement, as did my Grandma's.

Bernice's father had been stabbed to death, during a card game in a juke-joint, and bled-out right before her eyes. Her sister had been raped, when she was only eight. The rapist attempted to kill the child by beating her repeatedly in the face with a brick, caving-in the skull's frontal bone, above her eyebrows. She'd been left for dead. The child's younger sister had just happened to take-out the trash, right after it happened, saw the body laying in an alleyway, and had the presents of mind to call the operator. Later, the mother was called to come to the hospital to ID the dead body. In the cold morgue, the mother looked at the body, and couldn't recognize her own daughter, because of the damage done by the brick, but she had recognized her child's tennis shoes. But then shockingly, the mother noticed that the body was still barely breathing! As mentioned in the previous book, in those days, black hospitals were just houses converted into clinics, and the cooler basement served as the morgue.

Bernice's sister, who'd been pronounced dead, was still narrowly hanging-on to life. After two weeks in a coma, the child pulled-through and named her rapist. The town's white sheriff found the rapist, beat the man to death, and threw his body in the swamps of northern Mobile Bay, for the gators to feasted on. Of course, no official report was made of this, since the guy had been a veteran. While everyone knew that what the sheriff had done to the rapist was illegal, no one attempted to reprimand the sheriff. The law was handles differently, in those days. Today, Bernice's telling a six year old child such stories might likely result in the filing of child abuse charges. Nevertheless, without those stories, I'd have gone insane due to the malaise of living at Grandma's.

If you can't tell from how I rabbled on about hurricanes, allow me to say that I loath them. And, that's a pseudo masculine way of saying that I have a morbid fear of them. Around fifty years later, one of them, named Ivan, literally tore my house in half. The night it hit, I was laying in bed, apprehensively waiting for the giant storm to pass, when all of the sudden, one of the bedroom walls was ripped from the structure and had simply flown away into the

dark of the storm. I was left literally looking out into the blackness, with debris whizzing around my head… *shades of the Wizard of Oz*. The top of a pine tree had snapped-off and come flying through the air, and struck the corner of my house, and as soon as the wall had been breached open, the wind got inside and instantly snatched away the entire wall. A second later, the room's ceiling fell on top of me, so I was covered with the itchy insulation of the attic. For shelter, my child and I ran out into the loud violent storm, banged on the door of a kindly neighbor, who thankfully gave us shelter. The storm didn't stop for eight hours, and then it was days without power, and struggling to make repairs. During those days, the air was hot and humid and filled with mosquitoes.

By early the next morning, my Grandparents and I awoke in the dreary old house in the city. Unlike the previous day, the clouds were white and fluffy, and the radiant sun had broken through, and so, the expansive blue skies made it clear that the move from the enjoyable beach cottage had been totally unnecessary. There was no hurricane, it had just been a brief storm. The next morning, I was listening to the radio in the kitchen, while Bernice was frying-up some eggs, and cooking the grits. The

weatherman said winds hadn't even reached tropical storm status; it was nothing more than a simple thunderstorm. In 1954, there were no black radio stations in Mobile, and there wouldn't be for fourteen more years, when a Gospel station came on the air. Oddly enough, Bernice and other blacks just assumed that was the way things were supposed to be; after all, they wouldn't be allowed to vote for another eleven years.

The first thing Grandma had done, when we'd arrived at the house in town, was to call Bernice's male neighbor, ordering the eighty year old black gentleman to go tell Bernice to come to work the next morning. There was no 'please,' or 'thank you,' during the call. She couldn't call Bernice directly, since Bernice and her husband had no phone. Grandma knew the white operator's name and had asked her to please place the call, and needless to say Grandma felt the need to explain to the operator, why she was calling a black person. In wouldn't be for three more years that Wichita Falls, Texas would be the first place to institute the first true number calling, that is, seven numerical digits without letters, or short names, or without asking the operator to place the call.

Once again, I was stuck in the mind-numbing antebellum Mobile residence on 17th avenue, with Grandma and her ever-ready *Readers Digest.* The idea of the upcoming boredom caused a knot to form in my lower abdomen, so I suggested that we drive back to the beach house, and was told, by my Grandma, "That's just too much trouble, Joey." Grandma was still mad about Grandpa peeing on the bathroom floor, and she greatly missed having a maid to do all the cooking and cleaning. Moreover, she was not about to go back to the beach house, where the neighbors patently ignored her screaming at my absentminded Grandpa.

When we were departing the pleasurable beach cottage, I had packed my own stuff, which was nothing more than a white cloth laundry bag complete with a drawstring, filled with my dirty clothes, toiletries, and my smuggled bottle of bourbon. The bottle was tied-up inside several layers of clothes to keep it from clinking, and to mask the sound of its' sloshing contents. It was the bottle which the painters had purchased for me. I had removed it, from behind the garage refrigerator. At the time, my Grandparents were busy getting packed-up for the storm. Back in town, when the proper

moment presented itself, I hid the bottle under the aforementioned large backyard playhouse.

Desperate to stem the perilous monotony at the house on 17th, I walked around the featureless backyard, peered through the neighboring fences, and in the various bushes, searching for bugs and lizards. To this day, I like looking at the small creatures. With an entire week to go, before returning home, I wondered how I was going to endure the rest of my dull summertime visit. At least back home in Maryland, there were other kids, woods to explore, and a creek to swim in.

Just two years ago, I went of a brief vacation and paid my Maryland childhood home a visit. The woods, I explored as a child, were all gone. In their place, were rows of track homes. The silt runoff from their construction appears to have almost completely filled-in, and my childhood creek (Lewis Creek), which I'd happily swam in. It had been turned into a very narrow and shallow pond, only big enough for mosquitoes and tadpoles. One of the docks, which had once extended far out into the deep creek still stood, but was high and dry, without a drop of water below it. The other docks had apparently been removed…that's progress for you. Perhaps, we need

to get rid of the national parks, as well. Why keep any woods? The construction industry, as well as the concrete and asphalt companies need to make a profit, so let's keep over populating, and just cover the entire planet, with concrete and asphalt. With global warming, we'll soon have theme parks on the northern shores of Alaska. Let's turn all the earth's natural beauty into profit, and we can just get rid of all that unprofitable flora and fauna.

Unlike the previous summer, the north side of my Grandparent's backyard had been closed-off from their neighbors, the Smiths, by a new six foot wooden privacy fence. I wondered, if it had been erected, in response to the last summer's bomb blast, then I thought that perhaps it was erected as a protest, against my Grandma's yelling at Grandpa.

The Smiths were extremely conservative, and overly formal. The private couple always dressed as if it was Sunday, yet they never went to church. Mrs. Smith was the kind of person, who took her life's joys from things like being: punctual, organized, neat, and clean. She sat, stood, and walked with an extremely erect, ramrod, posture. Her cat appeared to be her greatest love. Mrs. Smith was forever cuddling, petting, and speaking words of affection to the

seemingly indifferent animal. When she sat on the porch, the cat would lay in her lap. Still, it showed no warmth toward her, but just more or less demanded her fawning attention.

Her husband, a security guard, worked at night, and the way they talked with each other, it was as if she hardly knew him, and visa versa. They behaved more like they were casual associates, fair weather friends, or distant cousins, which was not too different from how my then aged Grandparents acted toward each other. Most likely, menopause had upended Grandma's personality. The Smiths each addressed the other, using their first names, rather than 'honey' or 'dear,' plainly lacking the closeness that my parents displayed. I had the weird feeling that Mrs. Smith had more of an attachment to her cat, than she did to her husband. Perhaps, the mammoth mean orange tabby cat was her only genuine love.

Fritz, the ferocious furry feline, was known as, 'the neighborhood scrapper.' Both the cat's ears were somewhat shredded by his renown battles. The previous summer, I had enjoyed watching the extremely large aloof creature strutting around their yard. He was so big and brawny, that it was a little

like watching a miniature tiger, that had escaped from the zoo. Even as a child, I could sense that pound for pound the house cat was head and shoulders above any other neighborhood cat or dog, in strength, coordination, and speed. It was also clear that the Fritz had a marked tangle of neurons, which translated into a profound streak of meanness. Every movement the cat made seem to say, 'Don't mess with me, or else!'

He was an extremely agile feline, a virtuoso at leaping and snagging pigeons, which had made the fatal mistake of landing in or near the Smith's yard. After dining on a pigeon, all that would remain would be a fluffy pile of feathers and a smattering of blood on the grass. Even the bones were gone. I did admire the animal's hunting skills. Because of his ceaseless predation, fierce Fritz's diet was not just the canned cat food Mrs. Smith fed him. The cat's powerful acceleration and leap were nothing short of spellbinding. Large curved razor sharp claws extended out and forward, generally culminating with the swirling cloud of feathers, and with Fritz making a few vicious terminal bites to the head and neck of the bird. After he'd killed the animal, he'd lay in the grass next to it, with one paw still on the

bird. He'd look around as if he expected some other predator to come and try to take it from him, then after about one minute, he'd begin to eat the bird.

Many years later, my wife brought into our marriage, a wonderful cat we called, 'Brat Cat.' He, like Fritz, was a large orange tabby, but their similarity ended with their looks. Brat Cat was a gentle loving animal, whereas Fritz, was a violent psychotic killer. It's always seemed to me that there are animals, who are born evil, much as there are people, who are inherently evil, owing to genetically-determined overactive pieces of violent gray matter. As a child, I can remember certain families, where one of the brothers, who had the same treatment and upbringing as his siblings, would be the kind of kid, who relished in the torture of animals. For the reader's sake, I haven't bothered to relate those stories, herein. Although, these books do contain some amounts of gore.

That morning, I was strolling around the backyard adjacent to the new wooden fence, bordering the Smith's yard, when something unexpectedly slammed hard onto the top of my head. Whatever it was, was so heavy, that it caused me to lean forward and take two quick steps, to keep from

falling face down to the ground. *Has that new fence fallen on my head?* At first, I had no idea what was happening, but straightaway, intense sharp pains began radiating from my scalp. *What the hell is happening?* I didn't realize that I was under attack. At first, I was in a state of agonizing confusion. Something heavy had slammed on top of my head, was moving rapidly, and delivering lots of pain. For some reason, Fritz was furiously racking my scalp, with his razor sharp claws, though initially, I didn't realize what was happening.

Having regained my balance, I hurriedly raised my hands, reaching-up to investigate the strange painful happenstance, and hopefully, to end the hurt, but as soon as my hands went up, the attack abruptly ended, and with an audible thud, the big cat landed on the ground, directly front of me. Instantly, I realized what had happened. Fritz then gave me one quick over-the-shoulder glance, then effortlessly leaped and quickly climbed back over the six foot wooden fence. The attack had lasted only two or three-seconds, but it had left me with streams of warm thick blood streaming-down over my face, around my ears, and down my neck. The prodigious crimson flow soaked my T-shirt, making it cling to

my skin.

After feeling around on top of my head, and bringing my hands back down, I saw they were thoroughly covered in blood, causing me to remember the blood I'd shed from my injured hand the previous summer. *Am I bleeding to death?* Only twice in my young life had I been seriously injured, and both the bloody injuries had occurred in my Grandparent's backyard. *This backyard is bad luck!* Dad's lessons in poker had caused me to think in terms of probability. At age six, I didn't understand the mathematics of probability, but merely thought of it as how likely something was to happen, only without the corresponding permutations and computations. *What are the odds of my only two injuries happening in the same place?*

"You know Joey, you're much more likely to get two pair, than you are to get three of a kind. In fact, you're more than twice as likely to get two pair, as you are to get three of a kind." Dad explained. *That kind of makes sense.*

After seeing my bloody hands, I began to run toward Grandma's back door. *From now on, I'd better stay out of this backyard. Dad always says, 'three's the charm, so next time I'm dead for sure.* Mrs. Smith's cat

had, for some insane reason, decided to leap from the top of the six foot wooden fence, directly onto my head. Then, using his razor-sharp 'litter-box' claws, he'd opened-up several long, deep but very narrow cuts in my scalp, all the way, down to the skull. Terrified, I ran through the backdoor, looking for help, dripping a blood trail across the kitchen's linoleum floor. Head wounds tend to bleed a lot! Bernice was washing the dishes, when she turned around and saw me.

"Oh my God! What happened to yo head, Masser Joey? Whatcha gone and done to yo head? Ya need to go to de hospital, right now! Gee-ru-see-lay-em (Jerusalem)! Help! Help!" Bernice exclaimed, bringing Grandma into the kitchen.

"Mrs. Smith's mean old tomcat got me! That's what happened! Am I going to bleed to death, Bernice? Am I dying?" I fearfully asked, while bleeding a lot more blood, than I had the previous summer.

Bernice didn't answer my question, which served to further terrify me. *Holy shit! She really thinks I'm dying! I only made it to age six… not fair!* Springing into action, Bernice ran toward the bathroom, while screaming. Blood filled my eyes and momentarily

clouded my vision. *I've got blood in my eyes!* I kept blinking hard to clear my vision. The blood had soaked most of the upper half of my t-shirt, the wet cotton material stuck to my chest, back, and shoulders. Grandma had turned to run for her car keys. When Bernice returned, she did the same thing she had with my injured hand, after the bomb had exploded; she used another bath towel, pressing it firmly to my scalp, trying to stanch the tremendous blood flow. Grandma. Bernice, and I then sprinted for the car, while Bernice helped me onto the passenger seat.

"Dat big cat show done clawed you up good, Joey! Don't lean back on the carseat young Masser, less'n you be get'n it all bloody. Just ya sit straight up, till ya gets to de hospital. It ain't but a minute away. Ya'll be okay. Just hold that towel to your head." Bernice advised me, but her face said she was lying. At this point, I honestly thought I was about to die. It was the worried look on Bernice's face, which had frightened me, ergo I turned to Grandma and spoke.

"I want Bernice to go with us, Grandma." I pleaded.

"No, she can't go. Just go ahead and let loose the

door, Bernice. Close the damn car door, Bernice!" Grandma ordered the somewhat shocked and paralyzed Bernice. *Bernice really thinks I'm a goner.*

Bernice gave me a beseeching look, which panicked me. Her lower lip seemed to tremble as she spoke, while closing the car door.

"You be okay, Masser Joey. You be okay." *She's lying. Oh, holy shit!*

"Goodbye, dear Bernice!" I cried-out. *This is my last goodbye to her.*

This time, I remembered to put my hand on the dashboard, right before Grandma hit the gas, so I didn't go face first into the dash, as I'd done the previous summer. The car flew out backwards onto seventeenth street. Luckily, no cars were coming. Just as last summer, Grandma was sitting bolt upright, barely peering over the steering wheel. The tires screamed as the car lurched forward, careening around corners, Grandma sped to the hospital.

"My God Joey, what the heck happened to you? What did you do to that cat?" Grandma yelled, half angry and half worried, while driving like a maniac. *She thinks this is somehow my fault!*

"I didn't do anything, Grandma. It was no bomb,

Grandma! Fritz, the neighbor's orange lunatic cat jumped off the tall fence and landed on my head, and then he clawed me up, for no good reason. Maybe he bit me, too. I'm not sure." I explained.

"What did you do to that cat?" Grandma continued to accuse. *I'm dying and she really wants to blame me!*

"Nothing! That stupid cat just jumped off the fence onto the top of my head, and I didn't know what was happening. He just started ripping up my head-up with his claws, then he jumped down, and went back over the fence into the Smith's yard. It happened real fast, Grandma! Am I going to bleed to death, Grandma?" *How much blood is in my body? With all this blood, I must be almost empty!*

"No, you're not going to bleed to death. At least, I don't think so. Oh Jesus, I really don't know, Joey. I'm no doctor, boy. You're lucky that big tomcat didn't get your eyes! He could'a clawed out your green eyes and blinded you, forever." She proclaimed. *I didn't think of that!*

Because of Grandma saying, '…I don't think so. Oh Jesus, I really don't know…' I was seriously uncertain about my survival. Moreover, Grandma's

second comment about my being blinded firmly registered. *I may die and really could have been blinded by that damn cat.* The idea of being blinded seemed more terrifying than the idea of bleeding to death, so at that moment, I was stunned, one giant miasma of living breathing fear. *I'm probably gonna die!*

With my hands on top of my head, holding down the towel, I prayed I'd stopped bleeding. Wide-eyed and still barely peering over the steering wheel, Grandma hurriedly pulled into the hospital parking lot.

"Why couldn't Bernice come with us, Grandma? You didn't let her come with us last year, either. Why couldn't she come?" I asked.

"Niggers ain't allowed in hospitals, Joey. They're too filthy! It's what I've been try'n to tell you, boy. Doctors know how nasty niggers are, so they can't be allowed to go inside a clean hospital. Besides, if Bernice came with us, she'd have to walk home, or wait in the car. She can't do nothing for you, no ways. Niggers don't know nothing about medicine, cuz they're all too simpleminded, so stop asking questions, Joey!" Grandma angrily lectured me. *If I'm gonna die, and I'd rather die with Bernice!*

The same older doctor from the summer before, with the gold round spectacles, immediately eased my mind, telling me I was not going to die. Later, I asked him about blacks not being allowed in the hospital. He said that there were only two privately owned clinics, which were 'optimistically' called hospitals, where blacks received medical treatment in Mobile, and that only five physicians rotated between the two clinics. He also informed me that it was only in the southern United States that blacks were denied entrance into hospitals, and that they were often cleaner, than many white people.

"I've heard directly from those doctors, and they say that most of their black patients bathe and put-on clean and nice clothes, before coming into the clinics; that is, provided it's not some kind of emergency." The old doc then insisted that I not to discuss what he'd said, with anyone, especially my Grandma, whom he knew.

"Germs don't care about a person's skin color, boy; but, only tow or three of my white colleagues, openly treat negroes at the city's two black clinics, by doing that they lost some of their white patients. Word gets around. The other docs at those clinics are negroes, two graduated from *Meharry Medical College,*

and the other one came from *Howard University*. Believe it or not, if I were to treat a negro, I'd most likely lose my job, here. The people running this hospital would almost certainly fire me, and I'm too old to go looking for another job, and my wife and daughter spend money like water. Maybe when I'll retire, I'll volunteer to work at a negro clinic." As the doc told me this, he was using a pair of stainless steel scissors clipping-away on the top of my head. *My head is really starting to hurt!*

The doctor began dropping large blood soaked pieces of hair into a stainless steel pan in front of me. *Wonder what I'm gonna look like?*

Knowing that Grandpa would do nothing to harm the worried doctor, the next day, I discussed the circumstances about blacks not being allowed in the hospitals. Grandpa confirmed the doctor's statements. This caused me to wonder why there was such a huge dislike for blacks, amongst the whites in the southern United States. Why hate people, who've done nothing to warrant the hate?

Much later, I'd learn that the *Meharry Medical College* was located in Nashville, and affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It was originally designed to educate 'healthcare professionals,' not

doctors *per se*, for many people didn't like the idea of a black person possessing the title 'doctor.' That Medical Department at *Meharry* was established in 1876, and the *Howard College of Medicine*, in Washington DC, was chartered in 1868. During the 1930s and 1940s, various black physicians in Mobile treated black patients at the two private Mobile 'clinics,' established by physicians T. N. Harris and John Taylor. Catholics established the *Blessed Martin de Porres Hospital* (1941), for black patients, and then founded *Holy Family Hospital* in Ensley, Alabama in 1943 (about 50 miles away), as well as the *City of St. Jude Hospital* for Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama in 1949, but 170 miles away. But as mentioned, these places were all more like clinics, rather than actual hospitals, and nothing as grand as the white hospitals. The two Mobile clinics were basically run-downed houses, converted into mostly outpatient clinics.

White doctors, who were known to have treated black Mobilians, were often looked-on suspiciously. Most whites would refuse to be treated by such 'unseemly' physicians, for fear of indirectly contracting disease from blacks, as if the doctor would automatically be contaminated, and be a disease vector. On the other hand, I imagine the

primary reason many whites refused to see such doctors was as a form of racial protest. I'm fairly certain that the idea was that blacks needed to be made to realize that they were subhuman, and not worthy of the sacred world of medical science, not worthy of good health, except for how it served the needs of whites! Such kindly doctors were something of a slap in the face for the more bigoted whites. Having witnessed this barbaric medical bias and so much more, I've often wondered by more blacks haven't resorted to various forms of violent retaliation. I didn't know of any significant retaliation, until just recently (July 7, 2016), when Micah Xavier Johnson ambushed a group of police in Dallas. He killed five and wounded nine others. He was an Afghan war vet, and angry about cops killing blacks. Johnson fled and was trapped in a building, The cops sent in a robot, with a remote-controlled bomb to kill him. It wasn't long after, that the police chief of Dallas was a black woman.

"Judging from your wounds, it looks like at least the cat didn't bite you. You were lucky there, Joey. You're going to need some codeine and antibiotics, I'll given them to your Grandma. What did you do to anger that cat?" The old doc proclaimed.

“Nothing, doc. Honest…”

The head were deep, yet fairly narrow, and so, the doctor elected not to stitch them. After clipping away about a third of my hair, he washed my scalp with liquid soap, while I stood with my head over a stainless steel metal sink. Using a metal two-sided mechanical razor, he then shaved the affected areas, rinsed my head, dried what was left of my hair, then treated the wounds with a dark purplish iodine {betadine wasn’t available, then}, and let it dry. Lastly, he closed the lesions, by butterflying them, with several thick pieces of sticky white adhesive-tape.

The nurse gave Grandma two small brown paper envelopes: one with some antibiotic tablets, and the other with chalky white codeine tablets. I smelled both of them. The antibiotics smelled horrible, but not the codeine. The doc did such a fine job of closing the wounds with the butterfly tape, I never scarred much, and thought years the extremely thin scars faded to nothing. Grandma drove me back to the house, frowning the entire way. As had the doctor, she assumed that I had somehow provoked the cat’s attack, and I had rudely interrupted her morning do-nothing routine.

Back at my Grandparent's home, and mostly recovered from the shock of the attack, I stood on a three legged stool and stared in the bathroom mirror, above the sink. Grandma used the stood for the same purpose. My appearance was beyond bizarre with a choppy haircut, hideous bald spots, and huge repulsive purplish iodine stains, with scattered stained pieces of white adhesive tape, stuck firmly down to my shaved areas of scalp. *I look ridiculous!* At the circus, I'd seen clowns, who looked more reasonable. The longer I gazed at myself in the mirror, the madder I became with the big orange tomcat. Besides injuring me, that animal had managed to throughly terrify and humiliate me. *God damn that cat!* But despite my hatred for the cat, I was deathly afraid of it, and was hesitant to venture outside, and if I couldn't go outside I'd loose my mind, being stuck in the house with Grandma, all day, every day for nearly an entire week!

After a while, I decided to venture outside, but before exiting the back door, I first fearfully looked through all the windows of the house, but the big cat was no where to be seen. Slowly stepping outside, I hurriedly walked to the backyard playhouse. Making sure that Bernice and Grandma weren't looking out a

window, I extracted the whiskey bottle hidden beneath it, and quickly swallowed a couple of extra large gulps. Within moments, the booze steadied my nerves. Having replaced the bottle under the pink playhouse and fortified with liquid courage, I nervously carried-out a slow careful reconnaissance of the backyard; still, the evil feline was nowhere to be seen. Then, I used the backyard hose to rinse my mouth, so that the ever alert Bernice wouldn't smell the booze on my breath. *She'll think the alcohol smell is because I'd been in the hospital.*

Making sure that the creature was not again on the top of the fence, I approached and peered between the vertical wooden boards to see if the villain was in the Smith's backyard, but the vicious tomcat was not to be seen. *Where is that evil bastard?* Venturing around the house, and into the front yard, I cautiously expanded my search area, looking for the psycho, Fritz. Even at that young age, I realized that it was only the whiskey, which had granted me the courage to look for the animal.

At first, it seemed that the animal had just vanished, but then I spied the scary orange fur-ball stretched-out in the shade, on the Smith's two foot tall concrete front porch. He was just laying there on

the side nearest to my Grandparent's home, and the dangerous beast was staring directly at me, flicking its' tail, letting me know that he was still angry. *He spotted me, before I saw him! Shit! He's been watching me!* The cat was clearly alert and menacing.

After spotting the dangerous vigilant Fritz on the Smith's front porch, spurts of panic ensued; I was alarmed that I might yet be in for a second vicious attack, but luckily none came. *How can I ever feel safe, going outside, with crazy Fritz, out here?* Then, I remembered Grandma's comment and realized that the next time, the monster might claw my eyes out, and blind me, so slowly, I backed out of the front yard to return to, and enter the backdoor. *What can I do, about that cat?* Apprehensively, I went back into the kitchen to chew the proverbial fat with Bernice, and later, we ate lunch together. Grandma hated that I dined with her black maid.

Bernice could tell that I was seriously perplexed about the tomcat. Try as I might, I couldn't get the menacing feline out of my mind, mainly because my scalp was beginning to hurt again, not to mention the obvious fact that I looked something like a bizarre cartoon character. Grandma and Bernice tried to sooth me, telling me my hair would grow back soon,

and that I should be glad that the cat hadn't gotten my eyes. The latter comment only served to make me more fearful of the animal. During our lunch, Bernice informed me that possibly the cat had attacked me as a strange payback for the bomb, I'd set-off the previous summer. To my way of thinking, her comment seemed completely ridiculous. Now, I think she may have been right.

"Masser Joey, you knows after you blew-up dat bomb, last year, Miss Smith told us dat Fritz stayed gone fo a whole week. Maybe, dat cat clawed you-up to pay youse back, honey. Animals can be like dat, Joey. They is smarter than wees thinks they is." Bernice explained.

Jesus! Could cats really hold a grudge that long… a whole year? I assumed Bernice was probably just being superstitious, and there's no way that what she'd said could be true. But many years later, while taking a graduate course in animal behavior, I'd learn about the amazing 'extinction coefficient' of a pigeon. In an experimental paradigm, a pigeon was placed in front of a grid of squares. Periodically, a single square would be randomly lit-up, when the pigeon finally managed, to peck the lighted square, it received a BB-sized food pellet. Whenever the pigeon

pecked a lighted square, it would be rewarded with a pellet. This way, the pigeon learned that pecking a lit square, meant it would receive food. This procedure continued for a while, but at some point, the food reward was stopped. Nevertheless, the pigeon would continue to peck the lighted squares roughly 20,000 times, with no reward, before it would finally give-up on pecking the lit square; ergo, the extinction coefficient of the pigeon's memory was about 20,000. While initially, that may seem to indicate the bird wasn't too shrewd; on the other hand, it does indicate that the bird had quite a long memory, at least when it came to food. Perhaps, so did Fritz, and his attack upon my scalp had been provoked the year before, when I set-off the bomb, and Bernice had been correct, about the cat remembering me, and attacking me as a type of payback. In some portion of the cat's brain, it may have realized that my presence meant something terrifying might again happen. In fact, the cat may have been watching me, when I set off the bomb. In effect, my fear of the feline had turned me into a prisoner of my Grandparents' house, and made me feel like a coward. I was afraid to go outside.

Nevertheless, after drinking a few shots from the

whiskey bottle hidden under the backyard playhouse, I had started to undergo a gradual psychological transition, from being terrified to slightly less fearful. While I was definitely afraid of the big orange beast, my alcohol fueled anger was periodically replacing my fear. The more I looked at my ridiculously injured scalp in the mirror, the madder I became; again, this was a sign that my meager courage was sputtering back to life. After lunch, Grandma ordered me swallow an antibiotic pill and a codeine tablet. Quite likely, the codeine acted synergistically with the whiskey, to further fortify my confidence, since shortly thereafter, I experienced a near complete loss of fear. *I think that codeine, Grandma gave me has made me braver.* In fact, according to certain psychopharmacology studies, codeine (and other opiate based painkillers) does indeed act to reduce the fear-producing parts of the human brain. But that's probably part of the reason why addicts fear withdrawals, those fearful regions of the brain rebound, and become over active, and the addict becomes morbidly fearful.

With my drug and alcohol fortified courage, I momentarily, considered again trying to find Grandpa's revolver and shooting the cat, but there'd

be the obvious problem of the loud gunshot and the dead cat with a gaping telltale bullet wound. More importantly, I'd promised Grandpa I wouldn't touch the pistol, so using the gun was out of the question. Besides, the gun might not even have been in the house; at least, not when I was visiting. Next, I though about stabbing the cat with one of Grandma's big kitchen knives, but I had my doubts about whether the cat would actually die fast enough, before it could inflict more damage upon me, and of course there would be the problem with the telling stab wound. While considering my options, I looked out the front living room window, and again I saw Fritz, still laying in the shadow on the edge of Smith's concrete front stoop. Watching him, I noticed that he suddenly seemed to slightly wiggle and compose himself, and within a few seconds, the beast had obviously fallen into a slumber. He didn't look so dangerous, when he was asleep.

The fact that Fritz was sleeping made him appear vulnerable, which further inspired my alcohol and codeine-enhanced self-assurance. As my blood levels of narcotic climbed, my fear seemed to completely vanish, yet my thinking remained clear. As a result, a seemingly viable plan emerged, a minor epiphany,

not too different from how I'd conceived of the bomb, the previous summer. *Maybe, there's something about this house that lets me think more clearly.* This new codeine-inspired plan appeared to be completely doable, than using the loud gun or bloody knife, and there would be no telltale wound, no evidence. With the booze and the codeine crossing my childhood blood brain barrier, and the cat fast asleep, the new plan felt perfect; like something my Dad might approve of. After all Dad was the man, who'd away preached that revenge was good… 'plan it in a vacuum, never tell a soul, and don't get caught.' Death was Dad's idea of conflict resolution, but at the time, the idea seemed like a gift from God. I realized that if the plan worked, I wouldn't have to worry about the cat anymore, and I could safely go outside.

So as not to arouse suspicion, I nonchalantly strolled through the house, and silently out into the backyard, making sure the backdoor had closed, without its' usual 'click.' Grandma was still in the living room, reading something in the *Reader's Digest,* and Bernice was wearing long yellow rubber gloves, clutching a piece of steel wool, scrubbing-out the interior of the oven, while using some sort of powerfully smelly oven-cleaner, probably designed to

breakdown burned grease, and to give the user some type of painful brain cancer. With her head in the oven, Bernice was discontentedly mumbling to herself, and so it was the ideal time for me to act. For the next couple of minutes, neither Grandma, nor sweet Bernice, would be aware that I was outside.

Quickly, I entered *Fort Crockett* (the name for the large pink backyard playhouse), I opened Grandpa's black metal tool box, but instead of removing the two pair of pliers, as I had the summer before, I selected Grandpa's lightweight ball-peen hammer, with its' steel head and hickory hardwood handle. Swiftly, I stepped out of the pink playhouse, with the hammer concealed against my ribcage, and under the inside of my upper right arm. I headed for the front yard, where laid the sleeping Fritz. As I rounded the house, I walked quickly and kept my left side toward the house, so that my body better hid the hammer on my right side, should Grandma or Bernice happen to look-out a window.

Silently I crept-up to the edge of the front yard, strategically using the large azalea bushes as concealment. In addition, the bushes helped to hide me from the slumbering savage feline, in the event he awoken. The mere idea of the fierce cat

awakening sent a tiny jolt of fear coursing through me; still, probably because of the booze and codeine, I was able to stay focused on my plan, and I continued to creep across the front yard, while looking at the yards and windows of the two houses across the street to make sure no one was watching me.

I shoved-down the fear and forced myself to think only of carrying-out the plan. Silently and steadily, I crept all the way across Grandma's from yard, staying partially under the tall azaleas, edging ever closer to the slumbering orange evil fur-ball. Once in the Smith's yard, again I scanned the surrounding houses to confirm that no neighbor was outside, or looking out of their window, and as luck would have it, not a soul was to be seen. *I'm good to go!*

Not knowing how much longer I had, before the malicious mauler awakened, or when some neighbor might unexpectedly appear, I kept quietly walking into the Smith's front yard. *I wish I could be silent like an Indian.* In those days, Hollywood had made every kid believe that the American Indians were the masters of stealth. The furry orange beast was still sound-asleep in the shade, right on the edge of the

Smith's concrete porch. Unexpectedly, Fritz's body began emitting spasmodic jerks. At first, I thought the jerks meant that he was waking-up, but then I realized the animal was simply dreaming, just like my dog sometimes did. *Fritz is probably dreaming about clawing my eyes out.*

Heeding my Dad's hunting advice, I'd taken the time to note that the wind was blowing in my favor, from Fritz toward me, hence for a fraction of a second, I wondered if I could smell the beast, and I silently sniffed the air, but smelled nothing of note. *Maybe, the wind direction is a sign that God is with me.* Throughout these superfluous thoughts, I kept steadily moving toward my sleeping prey.

There's little doubt, that it was only the codeine and whiskey, which had allowed me to continue to close the distance to my terrifying furry nemesis. If Fritz had awoken, I'd decided that I would try to use the hammer as best I could to defend myself, but I knew that the speed of that large powerful feline would likely be too much for my six year old reflexes. As I continued to crept along, I studied the ground, making sure to only step on the soft green centipede grass. If I'd stepped on dry brown grass, or a dried twig, I could have been turned into

mincemeat by that big orange buzz-saw. Stealth and concentration became my watch words.

At last, stepping-up alongside the Smith's low porch and standing right adjacent to, and over the top of the malevolent sleeping Fritz, I didn't hesitant. Probably, less than a minute had passed, since I'd first looked-out Grandma's living room window and spied the big feline in its slumber. The fear of a second attack from those razor sharp claws was palatable, but then at that moment, the just fear stopped, and something I'd never experienced suddenly came over me. It was like an unexpected burning hatred, the anger was white hot, causing me to call upon every available muscle fiber, to maximize my downward swing. That surge of anger helped me to better manage the killing. Concentrating on speed and accuracy, the steel hammer made a direct hit on the top dead-center of the foul creature's cranium. For some unknown reason, I'd selected the more spherical peen end of the hammer, not the flat nail-driving surface, and I'd soon realize that was a mistake, and I should have used the larger flat surface of the hammer.

My Dad and I had often competed driving nails into four by fours. Our game was to see who could

drive a nail flush with the wood, using the fewest number of hits, and of course, without bending the nail. Since I was just a child, Dad allowed me to first drive my nail half its length down into the wood; still, Dad usually won. He didn't believe in undeserved rewards. He wouldn't have been the man, who believed in a trophy, just because you showed-up to play. As a result of that nail-driving game, I'd gotten-in plenty of practice, using a hammer. Dad would invariably suggest the nail-driving game, after we'd been drinking. In effect, he'd taught me to concentrate, while inebriated, and that day I repaid Fritz I was definitely inebriated. Dad and I had wasted hundreds of nails, playing that silly game. He also made me switch hands, so I learned to drive nails with either hand. My act of revenge, against Fritz would make full use of those very same nail-driving skills. As the hammer violently descended, I was filled with confidence, realizing that the cat's skull was many times larger than a nail head, ergo an easy target.

The impact of the hammer surprised me, for the cat's boney skull and brain afforded little resistance. The hammer's steel head deftly crashed down through both the top and the bottom of the animal's

skull, and so I could literally feel the rebound vibrations from the concrete porch, beneath the cat's lower jaw. Those reverberations came backing-up through the hard hickory handle and into my hand, slightly loosening my grip. The hammer had caved-in the top of the tomcat's skull.

Again, raising the hammer, I poised myself for a sudden violent reaction from the cat, figuring that even after I'd hammered him, the animal would still manage to make a final swipe at me. But with that single hammer blow, the terrible tabby was finished. To say the least, the big cat's death was anticlimactic, and completely lacking in luster. *Death isn't really anything!* The furry animal just seemed to relax and deflate, like a balloon, which had lost its' air. The dead cat reminded me of a spider. Alive, a spider may look huge and menacing, but once dead that same spider looks shriveled-up and relatively harmless. Dead Fritz looked like nothing more than a benign orange fur pelt. Once his life departed, there was nothing fearsome about the cat. *He just gone!*

Other than stepping on a few roaches, and shooting a few birds at the beach house, it was my first time killing something, up close and personal, and a mammal. It's an understatement to say that I

enjoyed it, and I was filled with a sense of pride. *Dad's right about killing! It's great! No more cat problem!* As mentioned, I suppose there's a bit of the psychopath in me. The feline's life had instantly departed, just as soon as the hammer struck home, and along with its' death, my fear of the cat ended. Fritz went from his dream state, to a state of nothingness, in a fraction of a second. I'd expected the boney skull to have been more durable, to be more like striking a rock. *Its skull is like the thin candy coating on a jellybean.* For a few seconds, I just stood there, savoring the moment, while gazing at my vanquished foe. There was not a smidgen of guilt, only pure unadulterated jubilation. Dad had been right... violence can solve problems. Of course, he was referring to killing people, but it ostensibly worked for dangerous house cats. I realize that with this psychopathic admission, I've now alienated some of you cat lovers, but please understand that I actually like cats, and for that matter, almost all animals. I just hated the animal that had mauled my head.

If I had my way, there'd be no zoos, no aquariums, and no hunting. Animals would be left undisturbed in their natural habitats. Animals could

be raised for food, but areas of the ocean would be protected against fishing, and no more killing the whales. But, nor should there be any pets, except for perhaps service animals. Believe it or not, animals belong where nature intended them to be. Man made breeds should be allowed to live-out their lives, but not to breed future offspring. Please bare-in-mind, that I was barely six, and I hated Fritz, not only for what he'd done to my head, but mostly because I realized that he'd turned me into a coward. He had injured me physically, but worse he'd injured my pride. Killing the creature reversed the latter of those unpleasantries. To this day, the question remains… was it my courage which had vanquished my foe, or was it the alcohol and codeine… endogenous or exogenous neurochemistry?

Gazing at the dead cat, it suddenly dawned on me that I faced yet another problem, in the form of the huge deep dent, smack dab in the top of the cat's head. The dent was more than an inch deep and loudly screamed-out, 'murder!' It was the result of my foolishly using the rounded peen side of the hammerhead. *I should have used the flat end of the hammer!* The deep funneling dent made a clear statement, that someone or something had hit Fritz

on the very top of his head. To make matters worse, the intracranial pressure transferred by the hammer blow had pushed both the cat's eyes slightly forward, so that they clearly protruded out of their sockets, giving the dead cat something of a cartoonish frog-eyed appearance.

Quietly, setting down the hammer on the concrete porch, I pinched and pulled at the animal's scalp and fur, attempting to diminish the deep cranial depression and to reposition the skull bones; still, even with all my manual manipulations of the cat's head I didn't get rid of the incriminating dent. Using my thumbs, I managed to press the eyes back in their sockets and partially close the demon-cat's eyelids. *At least, that looks a little better.* Still, it remained obvious that whatever had killed the savage critter had hit him square in the top of his head. At least, there was no blood. *Everyone will know I did this, since I'm the only one with a motive!*

Breathing deeply, I tired to calm myself and take a moment to figure out what to do about dead Fritz. *I need to hide his body. Maybe I can stuff him in the storm drain down by the curb.* I feared that Grandma or Bernice, or some neighbor might look-out their window at any second, and there I'd be, with

Grandpa's hickory handled hammer in one hand, and dead Fritz laying next to me, or that they'd see me carrying the cat's body to the storm drain. *I should have dug a hole under one of the azalea bushes in the back yard to bury him.* Just then, I heard some voices were coming from somewhere on the other side of the Smith's house. *Someone's going to see me, if I don't get outta here, fast.* So, leaving Fritz on the porch, I stepped back a bit.

With people apparently coming outside, my hiding the cat's body was no longer a viable option, and I didn't want to be seen standing next to the dead cat. Besides, ever since the bomb blast of the previous summer, Grandma was more prone to periodically checking on my whereabouts, and might already be looking for me. So, I gave-up on hiding the cat's body, and simply left the vanquished Fritz, where he laid, right on the Smith's front porch, ergo I turned and swiftly headed for the backyard playhouse to return the hammer to the tool box.

My hastily made plan had failed to consider a body disposal plan; but after-all, I'd only just turned six, and was operating on codeine and booze. Furtively, I replaced the hammer in Grandpa's toolbox; but first, I twice carefully inspected the

lethal tool to make sure there was no blood or orange fur stuck to it. Even though it appeared pristinely clean, I still wiped the hammer with my shirttail, then I silently replaced the hammer in the toolbox, positioning it exactly as it had been, when first I removed it. Lastly, I made sure there was no cat hairs on my clothes or hands.

My dear Grandpa had always stressed the importance of having an albeit, and not leaving incriminating evidence. To this day, I still wonder if Grandpa didn't sense that I had some criminal tendencies, and his lectures were designed to better protect me from prosecution, rather than to inspire me to be a law-abiding citizen. Exiting the playhouse, I headed for the back door. *What can I do about the cat's body?* Hurriedly entering, I stepped from the enclosed back porch, and leisurely walked into the kitchen, while smiling. My smile was not contrived, since I was plainly euphoric that the murderous feline was gone. I just unleashed the smile, to mislead the ever observant Bernice, who was still cleaning the oven, and choking on the oven cleaner fumes. This was years before the self-cleaning ovens, and home-use microwaves. Bernice was still breathing those horrible fumes. *How come she hasn't*

gotten sick and passed-out? The fumes were unbearable, so I walked over and opened the kitchen window.

"Man, those fumes are something else! Can I have some cookies, Bernice?" I asked.

"Who you tell'n? Go get some outta de pantry, Massa Joey. My hands is too messy, and I ain't feel'n none too good, neither; breath'n this here smelly oven-clean. Dis smell done bout killed me, child." Bernice stated.

"Thanks, Bernice. God, that oven-cleaner really stinks to high heaven. If I were you, I'd go outside and sit on the back steps to get some fresh air, at least for a few minutes." I urged.

"Once I get done with this here oven, I's gonna do just dat, cuz I's dizzy, but I only gots a little bit left to finish this mess." She said.

Bernice weakly smiled, and worked for about thirty more seconds, then she stripped off her dirty rubber gloves, and threw them in the sink. Without another word, she headed for the back door, looking rather peaked, for her shade of pigment. Once outside, she strolled toward the garage, which caused to me to recall, that the dirt floor of the garage was

Bernice's personal bathroom. *She still can't use the bathroom in this house.*

Later, I was talking with Grandma, and mentioned Bernice's dreadful situation, of breathing the noxious oven cleaning vapors. To which, my kindly Grandma flippantly replied.

"That's what niggers are for, Joey. They can handle stuff like that. They may not be too smart, but they do serve their purpose. Niggers are tough, and made for the dirty work."

Jesus, Grandma you sure can be a cold-hearted bitch. The word 'bitch' was the first demeaning word I'd learned. One of my parent's neighbors used it, to describe his wife, and I'd picked it up at age one. The wife's name was Ava, and the husband used to say things like,

"Ava don't be bitching so much."

Since indeed Ava was forever complaining, I immediately understood what the word meant. Perhaps, Ava didn't deserve being called a bitch. One day, when Ava was complaining to my mother that her husband was always leaving his clothes on the floor, I was one year old, and spoke-up.

"Stop your bitching, Ava." As I said that, Mom

smacked me on the butt, and being a quick learner, I never used the word around her again!

As Bernice emerged from her bathroom, the dirt floor of the garage, unexpectedly my Great Aunt Kate showed-up at the house, for an afternoon drop-by. After she'd expressed earnest shock and dismay over the condition of my head, and what the cat had done to it, she and my Grandma retired to the front porch to recline in the wicker loungers with its' overstuffed cushions. Grandma called for Bernice to bring a large pitcher of mint julep, three glasses (one for me), and a plate of pecan shortbread cookies, Grandma's favorite; I preferred chocolate chip. Fortunately, the tall azalea bushes, on the northern end of the porch, completely blocked the women's view of dead Fritz. The cat's body was only forty feet, from where the three of us were sitting. Their extended stay on the front porch, was preventing me from trying to hide the cat's body, and kept me worried that one of the two women might decide to walk over to the end of the porch, and see dead Fritz. *Thank goodness this furniture is so comfortable, so they won't get up and walk around.* After, having me walk over to her and bow my head, Aunt Kate examined my scalp and spoke-up.

“My God, what’s wrong with that cat, doin that to Joey’s head? Just look at that! You’re lucky that horrible animal didn’t get your eyes, boy. You know that cat’s a real crapper.” Great Aunt Kate exclaimed, still gazing at my head. *That cat won’t getting my eyes, now*. It was my Great Aunt’s rhetorical question, about why the cat had attacked me, which ultimately lead to my figuring-out a way to solve my body disposal dilemma. Another plan had been hatched, so I simply wouldn’t dispose of the dead fur ball! I too had been at a loss as to why the cat had ripped-up my scalp.Quickly tiring about hearing of the upcoming Camelia flower show, I momentarily exited the porch, at least until the mint tulip arrived.

Preferring Bernice’s company, I went back in the kitchen. She and I munched on a few cookies, talked, and sneaked a sip from the bourbon bottle, which Bernice was using to make the mint julep. Eating a hole in my soul, was the fact that Mrs. Smith would soon be coming home, to find the lifeless body of her dearest Fritz, with that telltale dent in his head. All the while, I kept mulling-over Great Aunt Kate’s question about why the cat would have attacked me, and my new tacit to deal with her finding the cat’s body. It was a bit of a risky gambit, but feasible.

Even with the new formulating scheme, my failure to not initially consider a body disposal plan, was nagging at me. *I really screwed-up, leaving Fritz's body on the porch like that.* No doubt, the highly emotional Mrs. Smith was going to do a total freak-out, when she saw her loving orange fur-ball stretch-out dead, and I desperately needed to get my plan into place, to allay her suspicions, away from me, the obvious suspect. I was the only person with a motive for murdering the giant tom. Nevertheless, I continued to rack my brain for the exact phraseology to implement my plan. It was going to be just a piece of acting. The potential solution to my dilemma lay in laying the groundwork for unraveling the mystery as to why the tomcat had attacked me. If Great Aunt Kate and those folks on the other side of the Smith's house had left, I still might have been able to hide Fritz's body. With Grandma and Great Aunt Kate on the front porch, and the fact that I could still hear the people talking, on the other side of the Smith's house, there was no way I could covertly retrieve and hide the cat's body. *I should have dug a hole inside the garage with that shovel.* Had the opportunity presented itself, I probably would have shoved the cat's body in the storm drain, and swept in some sand from the curb gutter on top of it. I thought that I could have

temporarily hidden the cat, under Grandma's house, and then later thrown it under Mrs. Smith's car, after she got home and went in her house. Mrs. Smith might later assume that she'd unknowingly run-over her own cat. Or, I could have put the cat's head behind the front wheel on the side away from the house, on the passenger side, so when she backed-out, tomorrow morning, she'll feel the bump and think she's run over and killed Fritz. The cat's head would be smashed, and so the telltale dent in its' head would be erased. But, it was too late for any of those plans, for there were still voices coming from the other side of Mrs. Smith's house, where she parked her car, and Grandma and Great Aunt Kate were still on the front porch waiting to get their buzz on, with the mint juleps; consequently, I couldn't go near the cat's body, without being seen.

Inside the kitchen with Bernice, I heard an immensely loud car engine, go racing past the house. The speed limit was 25 mph, but the car sounded like it was traveling three times that fast. The sound of the loud car engine seemed to fill the inside of the house. It was no doubt driven by one of the local teenagers. He was racing around in his old hopped-up 1932 hotrod, and so Grandma and Great Aunt

Kate began one of their favorite rant-n-raves about the reckless speeding teenagers. In the fading roar of the 32 hotrod, the answer to my dilemma had coincidentally been confirmed, if not reenforced. The speeding teenager was like a true gift from God, and played right into my scheme. The deafening roar of hotrod passing the house, had indeed signaled that it was time for me to put on my song and dance, to generate my much needed exculpatory evidence. 'Exculpatory evidence' was one of Grandpa's favorite legal phrases. Defense attorneys love exculpatory evidence.

"Joey, exculpatory evidence is evidence which helps exonerate the defendant, allows him to 'escape' prosecution, and helps me to get my client a well deserved, or not so well-deserved, not-guilty verdict. One good piece of exculpatory evidence is all you usually need to set a defendant free. When you're a defense attorney, you pray for exculpatory evidence. I literally do pray for that evidence, right before I go to sleep at night.Sometimes I hire a detective to help find exculpatory evidence, and some investigators are overly skillful at finding such, just like some cops are sometimes overly skillful at finding prosecutorial evidence, or getting a confession in those back rooms

at the police precinct." Grandpa had lectured me, for it was my feeling that Grandpa wanted be to be an attorney when I grew-up, or at least a criminal, who didn't get caught.

My God-given strategy for dealing with Fritz's body, with the obvious dent in its' head was simple. I decided to try to use Grandma and her hatred for the semi-reckless driving teenagers, to assuage Mrs. Smith's suspicions. I had thought of the plan, before the teenager drove by, and so he had simply enhanced my plan. Hopefully, Grandma would supply the odd bit of commentary to the soon-to-return Mrs. Smith, and maybe later to Grandpa, to help assuage my guilt. But, I've gotten ahead of myself, so please allow me to better explain the plan.

You see, my vastly ignorant Grandma absolutely relished the idea of telling people things, which she thought they didn't know. Usually, what she'd tell them was something that she'd recently read in the *Reader's Digest,* the newspaper's local section, or that she'd picked-up via gossip, at one of her *Camellia Club* meetings. Grandma was always desperate to play the part of the 'enlightened sage.' It's oft the case that the slower folks assume that role. As a result, many of Grandma's statements began with the

phase, “Did you know that…. Or Let me tell you….”

Since Grandma was sitting on the front porch with Great Aunt Kate, not too far from the orange furry corpse, I realized that they’d undoubtedly hear and see Mrs. Smith, who was soon to arrive home. Mrs. Smith was sure to go ballistic, over her dead Fritz. As mentioned, Mrs. Smith had no children, and appeared to have something of a loveless marriage, ergo the cat was probably similar to a surrogate child. Almost every day, Mrs. Smith would sit in her spindle-back rocking chair on her front porch, cuddling the retched animal in her lap and cooing affectionate words in German, her native tongue. It was a near certainty that she was going to soak her undies, when she discovered its dead body, with the enormous dent in its head. Grandpa had said that everyone possessed some measure of both good and evil, so apparently that trait extended to cats.

Grandma and Great Aunt Kate worked themselves into a regular frenzy over the reckless speeding teenage driver. Great Aunt Kate was insisting that Grandma call the police, and immediately report the insolent youth, but Grandma wanted to wait until Grandpa got home, tell him about the speedster, and let him handle the situation,

by calling the Mobile sheriff. Both, Great Aunt Kate and Grandma were furious and wanted the young man to be jailed. When a brief pause occurred in their blaring harangue, I used the opportunity to plant my seed of exculpatory evidence. I began my delivery by touching my head, as if the wounds were causing me pain.

"Geez, my head sure hurts, Grandma!" I gently interjected, to interrupt their nonstop harangue.

With all the iodine, and tape, decorating the top of my head, the lie was easily convincing. My segue was simply a strategic effort to break into their angry discussion about the speedster. The need to quickly interject was due to the fact, that Mrs. Smith could have returned home, at any second, and I hadn't as yet instrumented my plan. I still had to do something about the all too obvious incriminating dent in the cat's cranium, with me being the only obvious suspect.

"You need another pain pill, Joey?" Grandma immediately asked.

"No thank you, Grandma. You know it's really strange how Mrs. Smith's cat attacked me for no good reason. Why would that cat do that? The cat's

never bothered me before. And, I've never said, 'boo' to the cat, and now, just look at my head! I used to like the kitty. *He's more like a bobcat.* It attacked me for no reason. I just don't understand! Why do you think it attacked me?" I asked both of them, hoping their answers would be brief.

My question didn't get the reactions I'd expected. Since the top of my head was so funny looking, with all the bald spots, the tape, and the splotches of purple iodine, Grandma and Great Aunt Kate both politely turned their heads, so I wouldn't see that they were smiling, trying to resist laughing-out loud at my ridiculous appearance.

Grandma was the first to lose control, and began to loudly chuckle, over my ridiculous appearance. This made Great Aunt Kate follow suit, with a screeching laugh, a loud screeching sound capable of cutting glass. Their laughter made my planned lie so much easier. To ease their laughter, I forged a look of being hurt, but it didn't work instantly. When their laughter finally started to fade, I spoke up.

"Heck Grandma, I've always been nice to Fritz. I sure hope that he doesn't attack me, again." I'd begun to refine and weave my fiction.

“Joey, sometimes there’s just no good reason why animals do the crazy things, they do. We can’t possibly know what a dumb animal is thinking. Animals just do stupid things.” Great Aunt Kate explained. *She loves the word, ‘stupid,’ just like Grandma does.*

“They don’t call them dumb animals for nothing, you know.” Grandma proudly chimed-in.

“I’m sure you’re right. Has Fritz ever attacked anybody, besides me? I think that’s kind of odd, that he chose me.” I asked placing my left index finger on the left side of my nose, as I raised my right index finger to point upward, mimicking a gesture Grandpa frequently used that gesture, when he addressed juries, intending to make them more seriously consider what he was saying, and oddly enough, it seemed to work. He radiated intelligence and honesty.

“No, I don’t think he’s ever attacked anyone, just the pigeons. Why? What are you driving at, Joey?” Grandma asked. *I’ve got their attention.*

As mentioned, I knew full well that Grandma hated those speeding teenagers in their noisy hotrods, which regularly zoomed by the house. In

fact, both Grandma and Great Aunt Kate hated teenagers, in general, probably because they simply loved to hate. Ergo, the lie I was about to propose would be considered to be true.

"You think maybe the cat could have been hit in the head by a speeding car, and that's what made him go crazy enough to attack me? You know, after he attacked me, I saw him for just a moment, right before he went back over the fence, and his head didn't look right. His head looked kinda funny, like there was a big mark or dent up on the top of it. You know how those teenagers are always zooming up and down on the road out front of the house in their hotrods, and Fritz does roam back and forth across that street, hunting for pigeons and squirrels on both sides of the street. Just this morning, I heard a couple of those hotrods zooming by out front, here. If Fritz did get hit in the head, it might explain why he attacked me, for no good reason. The poor ole cat could just be plum nuts! It kind of makes sense, but I might be wrong. But, his head did look really strange." I said this, and shrugged my shoulders, knowing they'd both love the idea, since it made the speeding teenagers look all the worse.

At first, both women looked surprised, then they

firmly latched onto my contrived hypothesis, as if it was fact, as if it was manna from paradise… anything to further condemn the speeding teenagers! The only thing I could have said, which would have pleased them more, would have been a cruel racial slur of some sort, or if I'd said that I'd seen the driver, and he was a black teenager.

"You know, you just might be right, Joey. It makes sense. Maybe, the poor cat did get hit, by one of those teenage hooligans. That makes good sense to me; especially, sense you saw his head was hurt. What else would explain his attacking you. Those stupid teens certainly drive way too fast! You know Joey, I'll bet that's exactly what happened! You did see its head was hurt, right? I'll ask Grandpa to go talk to the Smiths, to make sure Fritz doesn't attack you again, and maybe he can get the sheriff to do something about those speeding teenagers. The cat probably needs to see the vet. Don't you worry, honey." She kindly stated.

"I'm not completely sure. I only got a quick glimpse, but I'm pretty sure the cat's head was messed-up, real bad." I ventured forth, slipping in just the very slightest of southern accents to be more convincing.

My hurriedly crafted duplicitous seed had been planted, fertilized, and watered, and so, I returned to Bernice in the kitchen, to nervously await the return of Mrs. Smith. While waiting for Mrs. Smith, time seemed to bogged-down, so I dished-up and dug into a bowl of ice cream. In those days, French Vanilla was my favorite. Ice cream and whiskey were my childhood remedies for stress and insomnia. Grandpa had successfully represented the *Goody Diary* in a few lawsuits, involving their employees, whence everyday after work, on his way home, he'd stop by the diary and pickup free milk and ice cream. He too loved French Vanilla.

As the afternoon wore-on into evening, Great Aunt Kate and Grandma left the porch and returned to the living room, turned on the black and white TV, to watch *What's My Line?* It was a popular game show, which always featured four blindfolded Hollywood stars, trying to guess what someone did for a living, by asking limited questions, such as: 'Did you work in the entertainment industry?' 'Did you do something which set some sort of world record?' 'Are you rich?' 'Did you write a book?' 'Were you, or are you, some kind of politician?' The blindfolded panel of four would have to guess the mystery guest's

identity. The questions were strategically crafted. I too enjoyed the show.

After Grandma and Great Aunt Kate had come back in the house, and Bernice had taken off her apron, and was in the process of getting ready to leave, I began thinking that I could quickly run outside, dig the hole in the garage and hide the cat's body. However, before Bernice could leave, I heard a car door slam next-door, signifying that Mrs. Smith had at last arrived home. *Too late to get rid of the body!* A few seconds passed, and Mrs. Smith stepped-up onto her porch, and instantly spied her dead cat, still stretched out cold on her front porch. The woman lost all semblance of control, but since I didn't know any German, I had no idea what her ear-splitting caterwauls meant. For that matter, I'm not sure it was German, but I know for a fact that it wasn't English. Mrs. Smith was louder than a fire-engine, and decidedly far more emotional; so much so, that I could clearly hear her cries, in the kitchen, in the back of the house. Mrs. Smith's initial scream was probably what you might hear from a woman, if she were being murdered. *Oh shit, this is going to be really bad!*

When the violent screams began, Grandma and

Great Aunt Kate forgot all about the TV, and swiftly shot-up out of their chairs, as if they'd been struck by a lightning bolt. After a couple of seconds, Mrs. Smith's loud words morphed into several drawn-out sobbing wails. The rather strange verbal outpouring made all the hairs on my body stand-up at attention. *Oh, shit! This is serious!*

"My God, is that Mrs. Smith, screaming like that? I'll be right back, Kate! What could have happened?" Grandma yelled.

Taking charge, Grandma headed out the front door to investigate. Bernice and I headed to the living room.

"My God! What's going-on?" Great Aunt Kate asked Bernice and I, as the two of us entered the living room.

Both Bernice and I just shrugged our shoulders. Due to the shocking intensity of Mrs. Smith's reaction, I had no problem looking surprised, just as did Great Aunt Kate and Bernice. At the same time, I realized Bernice was going to be the hardest of the three women to fool.

"What all dat yell'n be all about? Lordy, Lordy! I ain't never heard Mrs Smith yell'n like dat! Is the

woman die'n?" Bernice asked. *There's no going back now!*

Bernice and I ran to peer out one of the front room windows, and checkout the action, and Aunt Kate stepped-out onto the large front porch. Grandma had already walked out down the front steps, and towards the Smith's house. Bernice and I watched her marching across the front yard, to check-on the obviously hysterical Mrs. Smith. Great Aunt Kate stood on edge the porch, with her arms folded, silently observing the developing scene. Together, Bernice and I were looking out the same living room window. She was gazing out the top part half of the window, as I was looking out, the lower half. There was Mrs. Smith down on her knees, head bowed, clutching the dead cat to her breasts.

Um, um, um. My, my, my…" Bernice kept murmuring.

"What d you suppose is going on?" I deceitfully asked.

Since Bernice knew I'd been outside, I was afraid she'd figure-out what I'd done, so I didn't dare look-up at her, but simply stayed focused on Grandma, and the loudly blubbering Mrs. Smith, who remained

on her knees on the concrete front porch, continuing to clutch the lifeless orange fur bag to her extra large German breasts. *She's really got big breasts!* Even all the way from Grandma's house, I could easily see the enormous dent in the top of the evil creature's head. Most of the neighborhood had probably heard Mrs. Smith's earsplitting screams, ergo they were coming out into their yards, blinking and staring in wonder.

Mrs. Smith's wailing and screaming completely unnerved me, for only then did I realize the magnitude of my deadly deed, yet I felt no remorse, just fear of getting caught. Still, I was impressed that Mrs. Smith loved the cat, to the point that she showed such profound emotion. *I've killed something a person truly loved, but I'm glad I did it!* Where the dead cat had meant nothing to me, it evidently meant everything to Mrs. Smith. Where killing the cat had brought pleasure to me, it had brought misery to Mrs. Smith, and I marveled at that dichotomy. The only thing I felt was worry about getting blamed. *Only a woman could love that horrible cat.*

For a moment, Grandma stood in the Smith's front yard and stared-up at Mrs. Smith. The German woman just stayed sitting on her legs, sobbing passionately, while holding the dead feline. *Jesus, the*

cat looks like a stiff piece of fur-covered cardboard! It was the first time I'd seen rigor mortis. The troubled Mrs. Smith seemed to be unaware of my Grandma, and continued to loudly blubber, then Mrs. Smith lovingly placed the clearly inflexible orange feline back onto the concrete porch. *Now, she hates holding the stiff corpse.*

"Is that her cat? Is the thing dead?" Bernice asked, still looking out the window just above me.

"Sure looks like it could be." I carefully answered. *Wonder if Bernice is thinking I killed it.*

"Poor woman, she did love that mean old cat. She be heartbroken fo show!" Bernice correctly commented.

Since there was a mere twenty foot gap between the two houses, Bernice and I were easily able to see and hear everything which was transpiring. Grandma stood about ten feet from the emotional Mrs. Smith, and in a soothing voice, she gently, but authoritatively, explained to sobbing woman that teenagers had been racing up and down the road, and that she suspected that the cat had been hit in the head by one of the speeding hotrods, driven by the local hooligans, but then she continued to explain

and somewhat incriminated me.

“Fritz probably got some brain damage, and that’s why he attacked my young Grandson, Joey. Just look at the size of that dent on your cat’s poor old head! I can see it from here. It had to be a car that done that to him.” Grandma explained.

Grandma was extremely tender in relaying that confabulation to Mrs. Smith. At this point, it was hard to tell, if Mrs. Smith was paying attention to my Grandma’s words. It was clear that until that moment, she hadn’t noticed the dent, but was then staring hard at it. Then, Grandma finished-up her explanatory discourse, by saying,

“Joey saw that dent, right after Fritz finished clawing-up his scalp.” Grandma pointed with her pudgy right index finger, directly at Fritz’s massive cranial dent, then using her left index finger, she pointed directly at me, looking out the window. *Oh, shit!*

This new realization produced yet another round of loud screeching German expletives, followed by a couple more brief wails! Apparently, the dent was a lot for Mrs. Smith to process. *Jesus, it’s only a stupid cat!*

Without warning, Mrs. Smith stood-up, turned, and suddenly looked directly at me. It seemed to be an accusatory stare. *Has she somehow figured it out?* Perhaps the explosion, from the previous summer, had left her skeptical of me. Mrs. Smith's sudden glance then changed into a slight scowl, causing me to reflectively jerk my head back two inches. At that same moment, Bernice instantly looked down, and fixed me with an discerning look. *Shit!* Bernice may have murdered the king's English, and hadn't had much in the way of education, but she wore x-ray glasses, and was anything but stupid. *Crap, Bernice wonders if I killed Fritz, too!*

"Humph!" was all Bernice said, as she narrowed her gaze at me, but thankfully, she never questioned me. After the bomb, from last summer, Bernice had also cast me in an uncertain light. On the other hand, I was fairly certain that Bernice didn't object to my killing the evil animal. *She doesn't care if I killed Fritz.* In fact after the cat died, Bernice seemed to warm to me, taking me into even greater confidence. In a way, Bernice became my first conduit into understanding the seamier world of adults. Her stories usually riveted me.

Bernice may have known what I'd done, but had

elected not to say anything. She never questioned me, probably because she knew I'd lie anyway, and no one likes the stench of lies, except for maybe the liar, who gets away with them. In those days, I was proud of my lies, and so they smelled like roses to me. Probably another reason, Bernice declined to voice an opinion about the death of Fritz was the fact that if a black person became entangled in a situation, involving white people, the black person generally came out the obvious loser.

Soon after my Grandma had explained things to Mrs. Smith, the police unexpectedly showed-up, parking across the street right in front of Mrs. Smith's house. *Oh, no!* Most likely, one of the neighbors had called them, having heard Mrs. Smith's loud screaming. *Oh my God, I may be going to jail!* With the arrival of the police, Mrs. Smith stopped crying and ceased uttering her German phrases. VE day was only nine years and three months, prior, ergo it was clear that the cops didn't like the sound of her German. Lots of Americans still hated, because of that war. For many in the South, Germans were thought to be inherently evil, and a very large percentage of the cops, thought the same way. To many rednecks, every German was a nazi. Oddly enough, these days

many rednecks now admire the nazis.

When the cops discerned that the screams were only owing to the death of a cat, they laughed and started to leave, but not before my Great Aunt Kate went out to their car, and confronted them. She launched into a thirty-second rather loud grievance, about the neighborhood's problem with the reckless teenage drivers. The two cops politely endured my Great Aunt's diatribe, then politely nodded, while tipping their caps, saying they'd look into it, then drove away. The cop's laughter hadn't sat well, with Mrs. Smith, but in the early 1950s it was considered to be less than masculine, to care too much about pets. Livestock was a different matter, because they represented income. Wild animals were only thought of as something to hunt. Most people in Mobile weren't sure about the meaning of the word 'environment,' and the word 'ecology,' wouldn't be coined for twelve more years, in 1966.

After the cops departed, Great Aunt Kate righteously walked back to her car, and waved goodbye to Grandma, who was still tending to the lamenting Mrs. Smith. Before driving away, Great Aunt Kate checked her copious amounts of facial make-up in her car's rearview mirror, added a little

lipstick, popped her lips twice, then drove-off. She hadn't bothered to try to console Mrs. Smith, because Great Aunt Kate didn't like Germans. She also hated blacks, Japanese, Jews, Northerners, Mexicans, Catholics, people from California, and almost everyone except for southern white Baptists. She absolutely despised Yankees, saying that they were like painful protruding hemorrhoids… never good, but better when they went back-up north. She told that joke to anyone, who'd listen.

Mrs. Smith never asked me about her homicidal cat, but neither did she ever say anything to me about the injuries inflicted to my scalp. In fact, Mrs. Smith never said anything to me about anything, from that day forward, with one minor incident. The next summer, Grandma would tell me to take Mrs. Smith one of Bernice's pumpkin pies. When I knocked, Mrs. Smith spoke to me through the closed door, telling me to leave the pie in the rocking-chair by her front door, and she would retrieve it later, ergo I set the pie down walked off. Those were the last words, I'd hear from Mrs. Smith. I might have fooled Grandma, but as far as Mrs. Smith was concerned, the jury would remain dead-locked.

After thirty minutes spent consoling Mrs. Smith,

Grandma returned to the house. Mrs. Smith left the dead cat on her front porch, and walked sobbing into her house. Grandma was literally bubbling with enthusiasm as she spoke.

"Looks like you were right, Joey. Sure enough, that ole cat was most surely hit by a car… big dent right smack dab in the top of his fuzzy head… (She tapped the top of her own head.) The poor cat's head is sure enough messed up. You know damn well, the only thing that could'a done that was one of those crazy teenage drivers. You were sure right about that cat's head looking weird… right as rain, you were, Joey!" Grandma explained. *Grandma and Great Aunt Kate might be fooled, but there's still Grandpa to worry about.* Clearly, I had my doubts about fooling my canny Grandpa, who was due to arrive home soon. I greatly worried that he'd deduce the truth; after all, dealing with the guilty was his stock and trade.

While again iterating about the car hitting the cat in the top of its head, to Bernice, Grandma tapped her knuckles, twice on the top of her own head. For some reason, this caused Bernice to look at me and arch her right eyebrow, then she headed to the corner to retrieve her umbrella, while she quietly shook her head. *Yup! Bernice definitely wonders if I did*

it.

"Lordy, Lordy," was all Bernice would say about the dead cat.

After Bernice left, and Grandma had gone to the bathroom, I went out into the then dark backyard, reached under the playhouse, pulled-out my bottle, stepped back into the playhouse, took a quick swig, then I replaced the bottle; lastly, I turned-on the gardenhose and rinsed-out my mouth and swallowed a gulp or two. I was glad the cat was dead so I didn't have to worry about being outside, but glancing at the Smith's house, I realized I was slightly worried about the semi-crazy Mrs. Smith. She was a strong, big-boned woman, who was obviously prone to extreme emotion, and the manner in which she'd stared at me, when I was in the front room window, indicated that she might have put two and two together. But most of all, I was concerned about what my Grandpa was going to think. Indeed, I was afraid that Grandpa would see through my awkwardly planned deceit. He redefined the term brilliant, and my excuse about some reckless adolescent driver, hitting the cat, was a wee bit flimsy.

It was late that evening, when Grandpa finally walked in the back door, looking bone-tired and

bedraggled, and smelling of tobacco and booze. Today, I love both those addicting smells. *If Grandpa's good and tired, maybe he won't pay too much mind to dead Fritz.* At first, he didn't notice me sitting in front of the TV, but he just headed straight back into the dining room, in hopes of finding his dinner. He told Grandma that, after work, he'd won twenty-five dollars playing poker at the *Elks Club,* took off his coat and hat, and sat down to the table to wait for Grandma to bring him the plate of turkey casserole, which Bernice had prepared. When he turned and finally saw my bizarre-looking purple-stained head, with the missing clumps of hair, and the pieces of white adhesive tape, he dropped his knife and fork.

"What, in the hell, happened to your head, Joey?" He loudly exclaimed.

I started to answer, but fortunately Grandma cut me right off, and began to pour out the whole story about Fritz attacking me for no apparent reason, the trip to the hospital, and then she went into a lengthy discourse about Mrs. Smith's major meltdown, upon discovering her dead cat. During her explanation, I climbed-up in the chair directly in front of him, knowing that it would be best if I didn't appear to be

totally avoiding his gaze. Throughout Grandma's explanation, Grandpa kept surveying the damage to my scalp.

Grandma laid out the strange little fabricated story, in great detail, and went on to mention that the cat must have been struck by a car, driven by, 'one of those lunatic speeding teenagers.' Fortunately, Grandma claimed full credit for my idea, as I knew she would. She speculated that was why Fritz's head had a huge dent in it, where a car had obviously hit him, and that brain injury caused the cat to attack me.

"Joey, here, said he saw that the cat's head looked weird, after it jumped down off his head, and those teenagers have been speeding-up and down the road, like they own the entire city of Mobile. You sure need to have a talk, about them with the sheriff. So it only makes sense, that the cat got hit by one of them. The whole top of the cat's head was caved-in! Poor Mrs. Smith… oh, she cried like a baby!"

Upon mentioning the dent, Grandma again tapped a knuckle to the top of her head, and Grandpa tapped a knuckle on the top of the dining room table, trying to silence Grandma, then he again looked at me, but this time he was not gazing at my scalp, but

was giving me an investigating stare. *He's suspects something's amiss, but he's not too sure!* So, I relaxed, maintained normal amounts of eye contact… always ready with a bluff.

Grandma started in again. "You know how those crazy stupid teenagers speed up and down our street, Buddy (Grandpa's nickname)… in those loud stupid hotrods. It coulda have been a child they hit, instead of that big old orange cat. Like I've said, you need to have one heck of a serious talk with the sheriff, about those teenagers! You need to do that first thing tomorrow! It would do them good to be arrested! You don't want to wait till a child gets hit!" Grandma finished her presentation with one of her fake dramatic shivers, for added persuasiveness. The ridiculous shivering caused Grandpa to say, "Oh, Lord."

Then Grandma frowned, because her shiver act had failed to impress him. She rolled her eye to show she was angry that Grandpa had rejected her act. Lastly, she paused, waiting for Grandpa's promise to talk to the sheriff, but none came. He just frowned, sighed, remained silent, and finished his turkey casserole.

After dinner, he took a good minute, to inspect

my bizarre looking scalp wounds, then insightfully asked me what I knew about the cat's death. He wanted to hear the story directly from me. Matter-of-factly, I went along with Grandma's story, giving a near perfect iteration, implying that the car hitting Fritz was Grandma's idea, and that it made perfect since. Thanks to the whiskey, I laid-out the lie with an air of relaxed calm… I was fast becoming a virtuoso of deception, and knew better than to make a play for his sympathy, expound too much, or add anything; nor, did I pretend like I felt sorry for the animal. Briefly, I mentioned that the codeine had helped with the pain, hoping that if Grandpa sensed something dishonest about my behavior, he might attribute it to the drug.

While Grandpa expressed sincere sympathy for my scalp injuries, the gap between his bushy brows periodically narrowed enough to indicate that he was having minor reservations. Like Mrs. Smith and Bernice, Grandpa wasn't sure, about my involvement with the death of Fritz. But if Grandpa did suspect the lie, he didn't voice it. *Maybe, if Grandpa thinks I killed the cat, he doesn't care.* There was the possibility that had he decided, that if I killed the cat, I was within my rights to do so. Grandpa did say that

sometimes the murders, he'd defended, were justified in their killing, and that they'd done the world a favor.

Before turning in for the night, Grandpa soaked in a bath of epsom salts, while smoking a *Tampa Nugget,* and booming-out a strange non-operatic song about two warriors, *Abdul Abulbul Amir* and *Ivan Skavinsky Skavar*. To the best of my recollection, Grandpa said they were an Arab and a Russian, respectively. For some reason, he often sung that goofy song. Once, when I asked him about the song, he told me that the meddling of the Arabs and the Russians would bring about the end of the world, one day. He may have been right, on the other hand, it looks more like the greedy pieces of gray matter, owned by the CEOs of the America's military industrial complex, and the polluting coal burning power plants, will beat the Arabs and Russians to the punch.

Just before Grandpa climbed into his bed, wearing his dingy old cotton pajamas, he grabbed a flashlight and walked out into the backyard, and stepped inside *Fort Crockett* (the playhouse). A moment later, I could hear the loud 'clank' of the hammer being tossed back into his tool box. Clearly,

he lacked conclusive evidence, yet he plainly suspected me; nonetheless, he never again brought-up the dead cat. The preponderance of evidence just wasn't there for him to be certain, and Grandpa didn't care about a dead cat. As far as Grandma and Great Aunt Kate were concerned, the speeding teenagers were one hundred percent to blame. Grandma went on about them for days, and seemed to be oblivious to Mrs. Smith's reservations, concerning my guilt.

For the time being, it appeared that I had committed the near perfect crime, only to confess it here, sixty years later. The next morning, Fritz was placed in a wooden apple box, complete with lid and label, *Scott's Crisp Apples*. Mrs. Smith had lined the crate with two old sweatshirts and buried the miserable cat in their backyard. There was even a wooden white cross, which wasn't there the next summer. Her husband had made the cross out of two pieces of a broken yardstick, wired together and spray painted white. Grandma attended the cat's funeral, and Mrs. Smith read a verse from the Bible.

Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his

beast,
but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.
Proverbs 12:10

I was not invited to attend the funeral, but watched it standing on a chair, looking through one of the tall kitchen windows. Pleased that the devil cat was dead, I contrived my own brief obituary, in verse.

Sweet dreams my orange jelly bean. That's what you get for being so mean.

Joey Bone

That was my first attempt at poetry. After killing Fritz, every time my molars would crack through the thin hard shell of a jelly bean, I'd think about the hammer breaking through Fritz's thin cranium, and I still do to this day. The macabre rhyme may have been right in vogue, since many childhood nursery rhymes are fairly gruesome, as is *It's Raining It's Pouring*, which first appeared in *The Little Mother Goose* publication… Anon, *The Little Mother Goose* (1912, Dobb, Mead and Company, 3rd edition, 1918,

page 169).

It’s raining: it’s pouring.

The old man is snoring.

He went to bed and bumped his head.

And he wouldn’t get up in the morning.

Neither would Fritz be getting up, after the bump to his head. Why do you suppose that there are so many old-fashioned children’s nursery rhymes, which are somewhat ghastly? Now, we are supposed to shield children from the morbid idea of death, when not too many years ago, the sick little rhymes were religiously drilled into our heads, when we were but kids. Perhaps this was done, because people generally didn’t live as long, and so they wanted their children to be acutely aware that life could be brief, and to be better prepared for the inevitable end. Nevertheless, now days, kids play video games, which contain some fairly bloody and gruesome graphics.

That night, after my Grandparents were fast asleep, I got the gardener’s drinking jar, from under

the kitchen sink. It was sitting right next to the smelly over cleaner. Then, I went into the backyard and retrieved my bottle of bourbon from underneath the playhouse, poured three fingers, one more than my usual two for sleep. The extra finger of liquor was my well deserved reward from having survived the stresses of that day, and for having vanquished Fritz. The only three flies in the ointment were Mrs. Smith, Bernice, and Grandpa, yet none were certain of my guilt, and they didn't discussed the issue with me.

Once I'd replaced the whiskey bottle, behind a cinderblock support under the playhouse, I quietly walked around my Grandparent's home to sit on the front porch, and sip from John's jar, wondering that if I got John's germs would I grow-up to be a tall strong giant like him? All the neighbors had gone to bed, so I knew no one would see me, ergo I just sat outside on the comfortable wicker lounger, enjoyed the exotic sounds of the tree frogs, the soothing buzz of the smooth whiskey, and the magnificent sweet exotic scent of the blooming confederate jasmine. The only light came from the slightly orangey, quarter moon, sitting in the black sky barely above the magnolia trees, across the street, and even in that dim light their white blooms were discernible.

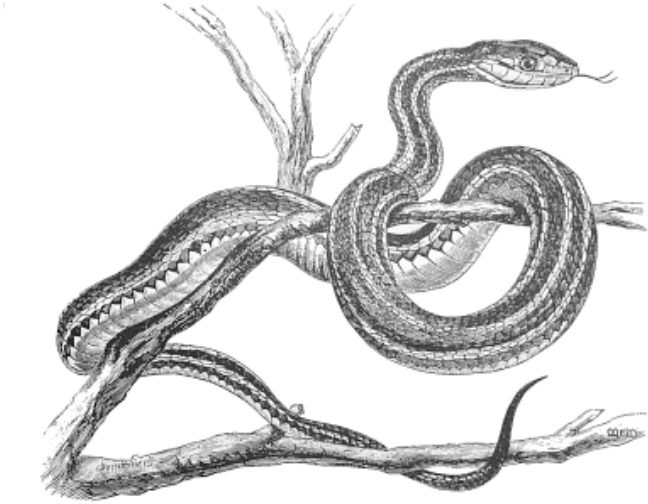
The Smith's concrete porch was cast in dark shadows and the house lights had long been extinguished. I quietly walked over to the corner of the porch, closest to the Smiths, and the darkness permitted me to imagine a dark lump of a silhouette on their porch. Not being a sensitive kid, the memory of the animal's death filled me with pride. And then, there it was in living neon color, alive and well walking around in a tight little circle, flicking his threatening tail, right where I'd nailed him with the ball-peen hammer. It was only a pleasant hallucination. With a few more sips, the image was forced to fade. *All the really bad stuff happens at Grandpa's house.* Alcohol typically shuts-down my hallucinations. Once you're a serious drinker you also know that too long without alcohol brings them on.

The whiskey allowed me relax and sweat a bit, so when I'd at last finished my drink, I returned to the back yard, stripped naked, and used the cool water to bath away the sweat, rinse-out the whiskey taste from my mouth, and I washed-out the gardener's drinking jar. Afterwards, I sat nude behind the house on the back door steps; then once dry, I pulled on my PJs, and walked back inside. After I replaced the jelly jar, I sat at the kitchen table, and

allowed my mind to once more happily replay the details of the day. Feeling the sleep-inducing effects of the booze setting-in, I walked into the bathroom, drank some water from the tap, to avoid the morning hangover, peed but didn't flush the toilet, and silently climbed into my bed. When something terrible happens, it may remain as a bad memory, but depending on how you react, it can either weaken or strengthen you. To some degree it's about how you decide to manage your adrenaline… fear or pleasure.

You shake, or you shake things-up.

The Five Quintets by John Fitzgerald



THE PEPPER vs. THE GRASS SNAKE

or

(Quid pro quo)

While I was fortunate enough to have been born with good and loving parents, and was never truly abused or mistreated, there was one time I came close to being an authentic victim of child abuse, at the delicate hands of my sweet Mother. Please realize that what I'm about to describe was only a single occurrence, and was, by no means, a pattern of maternal abuse. In fact, back then, no one would

have considered it abuse, except for perhaps me, the victim.

Oddly enough, just as had the bomb the year before, the result of Mom's solitary abuse served to fill me with an abiding confidence, as well it created a long and usual type of competition, between my mother and me, thereby permanently changing our relationship. Her mistreatment of me, if you can call it that, occurred about six weeks, after I had happily and fatally hammered the dastardly Fritz, in midsummer of 1954.

In those days, airline travel was considered to be an exorbitant luxury, an excessive expense, for almost anyone in the middle or lower economic groups. It was only to be rarely indulged in, when all other means of transportation were unavailable. Because of that, and since my parents thought me a capable six year old, I was put on a train alone, to return home from my visit with my Grandparents. I was to ride from Mobile to Washington DC, with only one change of trains. Grandma had driven me to the downtown Mobile station to board the train. It was the old *Gulf, Mobile, and Ohio Railroad Station*. I carried all my clothes in my white laundry bag.

The antique train station was a huge stucco

building, with a clay tiled roof, and looked like some Mexican styled fortress. Grandma told me that such tiles last nearly forever, and keep the building from overheating in the hot summer months, and are easily replaced, if broken. Mom was supposed to pick me up, when I arrived in Washington DC, and then drive me back to our house in the country, just outside the Naval Air Station at Patuxent River, Maryland. Grandma gave me my traveling instructions.

"Joey, all ya gotta do is make sure you get off the train, once ya get to Atmore, and then you just get on the train going to Washington, DC. It couldn't be easier. Just ask the conductor, if you need help. You're a big boy, now. You can handle it. Nothing could be simpler than that, child. If ya have any trouble, all ya gotta do is ask the people, who work at the train station, to help you get on the right train, going to Washington DC. It's no problem. You'll see. Once you're in Atmore, the train going to Washington will be get'n there just a few minutes, later. *I don't think Grandma has ever been on a train.* You won't have to wait long, so there's nothing to worry about."

"No problem… I can do that. Have you ever been

to Atmore, Grandma?"

"No, I haven't child, but that doesn't matter. I hear the people in that one horse town are real friendly country folks, Joey. Country people are kind of simple-minded, but at least they're honest. *Grandma never misses a chance to criticize.* Nothing for you to worry about, boy. They'll help you get on the right train. Don't get on any train but the one going to Washington DC. Once you're in Washington DC, your momma's gonna be there to meet you. It's easy… nothing to it. You'll see… Now give your Grandma a great big hug and climb onboard, then hurry-up and go find yourself a real good seat by the window on this side of the train, so you can wave goodbye to me, and so you can see all the horses and cows, as you ride through the countryside." *What's with looking at horses and cows?* Such was Grandma's parting advice, as I climbed the three metal steps to board the train, while thanking her for the eventful two week visit.

"Thanks for allowing me to visit, Grandma. See you next year; I hope."

Traveling along the rails, I didn't see a single horse, but there were indeed lots of cows. There may have been a few horses, but I spent most of my time

talking, with an aged farmer, who raised hogs. What the crotchety old guy told me, shocked me. The shocker was how he fed his hogs. He said he divided them into three groups. The first group was fed garbage, which he got from the city dump, with a little corn thrown-in. The shit pooped-out by that first group of hogs was then fed to the second group, with more garbage mixed in. The third group only ate the shit from the second group. The groups were rotated every three days. As a consequence of this lecture on the train, I've viewed bacon, pork-chops, pork belly, ham, etc, as a weird form of garbage and pig shit, and I've never been to interested in eating pork… 'poop meat!' I wonder if said hog feeding procedures are still used, today. Think about that, the next time you eat bacon or barbecue.

Once the train pulled into the Atmore station, I disembarked, onto the station's wooden platform. The Atmore train station was a virtual beehive of confused excitement. *Something's wrong, here!* Men were shouting and running wildly to and fro, gathering-up and carrying tools, as well as various types of equipment. Some of the men looked worried, others just serious. Cars, filled with workers, were firing-up their engines, spinning their tires, and

racing away. Judging from the way people were shouting, it was easy to tell some kind of crisis was afoot. One large fellow seemed to be in-charge, shouting orders left and right.

"Jack, go find doc Richards and tell him to bring his nurse and lots of supplies. Sure as hell, there's gonna be hurt folks, and maybe even some dead ones. We're likely gonna be work'n through the night boys, repairing track, and lord only knows what we're gonna have to do about the locomotive and cars. Move it, guys! Mark, go tell Larry we're gonna by need'n his extra large bulldozer, and to start head'n that way., and to bring his sons with him. Ed, you gather-up all the fire extinguishers, flashlights, lanterns, the station tools, pry bars, sledge hammers, rail carriers, first aide kits, mig and tig welding shit, generators, and plenty of food and water. If all that don't fit in the cars, then load the big shit onto that hand-car and the work truck, and head on out. Hurry! Get Bernie and Al to pump the handles on that rail cart; they're the strongest, and they'll get there the fastest. It ain't but about a mile. The crash is just around that far bend. We'll also be needing replacement ties, rails, and spikes, load them on that ten wheeler work truck. Bring plenty of water jugs,

too. Don't get too close too fast, lessen that big locomotive overheats and blows everyone to kingdom come. Gotta safe that boiler."

The reason for all the hubbub was that the train that going to Washington, which I was supposed to have changed to, had failed to arrive. The engineer had been drunk, passed-out, and failed to slow for a curve, hence the train derailed, and went plowing through some Alabama countryside, taking down a few trees. The locomotive had stopped half buried in the side of a sandy hill, where it continued to overheat, but not for long.

When it finally blew, I'd only been at the station for two minutes. I heard the explosion, and even felt it through the bottoms of my feet. Luckily, the work crew hadn't quite gotten to the crash sight. Fortunately, the injured engineer (named, Cletus) had bailed-out, before it hit the hill, and though unhurt. He'd run down the tracks to the station to deliver the bad news.

A few the passengers weren't so lucky as Cletus, still no one was killed. A lot of the injured were sent south to *Sacred Heart Hospital* in the nearby city of Pensacola, Florida. One of the newer rail-lines ran straight south to that coastal city. It was rumored to

be the oldest city in the United States, even older than St. Augustine. Years later, I visited that city, and even though it was geographically located in Florida, culturally, it was a lot like southern Alabama, with a statue of a confederate soldier on a hill overlooking the city.

While standing on the station's wooden platform, with my laundry bag in-hand, I was approached by a tall rather unique looking black man, with a long white beard and short white nappy head hair, dressed in a dark blue uniform, which looked like it belonged on a hotel bellman, complete with gold braiding and brass buttons. Grandpa always said that if you see a black man with white hair you could bet he was extremely old, and subjective observations have proven that true. The brim of his round matching cap was shiny patent leather. He first welcomed me to Atmore, then questioned me, about where my parents were. Instead, I mentioned my famous Grandpa, the attorney, living in Mobile. The black gentleman appeared surprised, for he clearly had heard of my Grandfather. Mentioning my his name, caused the old man to suddenly become my steadfast ally. Grandpa's reputation extended throughout the South.

“It be look’n like yo train to Washington will be delayed, masser. Dat was it, dat we just heard explode, round de bend, there.” He advised.

The white man, with a thick bull-like neck, and dressed in farmer-johns, who still shouting orders. He obviously was in charge of organizing things. As it turned-out, he was putting together the rescue group and equipment to go to an accident site. The powerful-looking man continued bellowing like a bull.

“What a bunch of horse-shit… I been tell’n Cletus, bout his God damn drink’n. He knows better’n that! Now he’s done up and probably killed some people, and stupid Cletus ain’t got an itch to scratch, and now he ain’t got no job. It’s the truth about drunks never get’n killed in accidents; they’s just too damned relaxed.” *If I’m ever about to be in a wreck, I guess I should relax.* The bull-necked white man then turned and saw me standing there. He walked three steps in my direction, then yelled, again.

“What the hell you doin here, kid, anyway? Who you with?” The man noticed asked me.

“I was waiting for the train to go to Washington DC.” I answered.

“It ain’t come’n, son. It done went off the tracks. Where’s your mother, anyways?” He asked.

“In Maryland… she’s gonna meet me at the train, when I get to Washington DC. You gonna be late get’n there, kid. Who’s with you, kid?” He again asked, turning his head and spitting-out a huge volume of thick brown tobacco juice, right onto the well made ligneous planks of the platform. *God he’s got one giant plug of tobacco in his mouth.*

“Nobody is with me, sir. I’m by myself, but I’m okay. Can I go see the train wreck?” I asked.

“You shit’n me, kid? Hell no, you can’t go see that train wreck. You’d be in the way, and maybe get hurt or killed. Someone needs their god damned melon examined for put’n you on the train alone. *That would be Mom and Grandma.* Stay right here, at the station, sonny. Don’t leave, and I’ll be back. Don’t be leave’n the station… ya hear me? Stay put, right here. That’s all I need right now is to worry bout some stupid kid, Sheee-it! What the hell is your name, kid? What the hell happened to your hair?” He said this with a serious crazy look. *This is gonna be the first time I say my name is Joe, instead of Joey.*

“A cat attacked my head. My name is Joe, sir.”

“That cat must’a really hated your head. Okay… just stay put, Joe. I’ll be back later. Bye, kid! And, don’t try to go sniff’n around that dead train round de bend down there. With all the goins-on, ya could get yourself killed real easy.” *I’m an adult now, traveling alone, no longer little Joey, but Joe, and I killed that evil Fritz.*

After several long boring hours, the bull-necked boss man returned, and told me that I could spend the night in the train station, and that I could sleep on any of the hard wooden benches, which just like church pews. He went on to say, that the tracks were almost cleared, and didn’t require much more repair, so another train would probably soon be coming, some time the next afternoon, to take me on to Washington. The bass man also said Cletus might be going to prison. Fortunately for me the entire train, engine and cars, had come completely off the rails, leaving most of the curved track undamaged. The bull-necked man didn’t say anything about the injured or dead people. Nowadays, the post accident inspections and regulations would have the rail-track closed for weeks.

Later, after I was home, my Mom phoned Grandma, and I found out that no one had been

killed in the train derailment. Mom's long-distance phone call lasted less than a minute, since long distance calling was expensive. The phone company had people believing, that if the electrons had to flow down that copper wire for another coupla microsecond, it somehow should cost lots more money, and hardly anyone questioned that. Most folks didn't realize that the exuberant log distance charges were nothing more than a gimmick, so the phone companies could rip-off their customers, much as cellphone companies now do. It was true that the early phone companies had to employ more relay operators, and the record-keeping was harder, but the cost of those things was relatively insignificant, compared to those charges. Now, it's the same for cellphone minutes, and how the cellphone companies charge incredibly exorbitant fees, for calling outside the country, and most of the cellphones cost less than two dollars to make. It's all so ridiculous! Science keeps making things easier and cheaper to manufacture, yet the prices don't reflect this; if fact the prices increase disproportionate to the cost of living, so in essence people live more poorly.

Likewise, this is similar to how the pharmaceutical companies want people to believe

that researching and making drugs is incredibly expensive. Most of the research, which allows the drug companies to make new drugs comes from NIHH grants, funding university scientists, and is part of the national budget, created by your taxpayer money, and so it doesn't actually cost big Pharma a dime. Insulin was discovered about a million years ago and is manufactured cheaply, then marked up about 20,000 percent, when sold to the customer! Likewise, our politicians and the media fool the American citizens into believing certain foreigners are our deadly enemies, so that the military industries can make tons of money from manufacturing countless weapons, and the other accouterments of war, used to kill millions, in trumped-up wars and various other operations. The military industries, the intelligence agencies, and their puppet politicians are the light which guides our country.

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above
From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam

God bless America, my home sweet home…

by Irving Berlin

Before leaving the train station that evening, the bull-necked man walked down the street to a small diner, and brought me back a paper plate with a hamburger and fries, minus any condiments. While I chewed, Bull-neck sat-down and drank whiskey from a glass pocket flask. In those days, lots of men and some women carried whiskey flasks. Today, you'd likely be arrested. I asked Bull-neck for a sip, but he went ballistic. For some reason, or maybe it was because I was a visitor, Bull-neck talked to me a bit, about the town of Atmore.

He'd told me that Atmore had come into existence, explicitly because of the railroad. Bull-neck was obviously impressed by that fact, and I couldn't understand why. The location, which was to become the town of Atmore, was a place where there just happened to grow great numbers of large trees, mostly oak, but many others as well, ergo the location had been a source of railroad ties; hence, the railroad station, which I was sitting-in was

completely wooden, and had been the first structure to be built. Indeed, as I looked around the building's inside, I could see it wasn't anything like any other building I'd ever seen; the boards and beams seemed thicker and wider, and sort of reminded me of a giant, extremely well built log cabin. According to Bull-neck they had been cut by two-handed saws. The town's second structure was a sawmill to cut-up the trees into railroad ties, and to create lumber for the houses and buildings of Atmore. Giant pits were dug by hand, into the earth, and filled with creosote, used to soak the newly cut railroad ties, and later the telegraph and telephone poles. Consequently, the little country town, had contaminated ground water. In addition, the railroad workers routinely applied the creosote to their cuts, to treat skin infections, and bug bites. Farmers also used it to deal with sores on horses and cattle, as well as to treat canine mange. Most likely, huge amounts of said creosote, which got into Atmore's drinking water, may have had something to do with an early epidemic of cancer in the town. All that started around 1870. The rail lines going to Pensacola and Mobile, didn't come along, until the early 1900s. By 1914, the rail had connected-up, with Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. It was called *The Old Southern States*, and the children

of Atmore called it the *G, F, & A Line,* for Gophers, Frogs, and Alligators, since Northwest Florida and Southern Alabama were chalk-full of those three animals. After receiving the railroad lecture, Bull-neck told me he had to get back to the crash site, and left.

Man's dominion over nature has become like Satan holding dominion heaven.

Yan W. Amore

Inside the old uniques wooden train station, I felt relatively safe, for back then, the world was a far less criminal place, with fewer child-threatening monsters. Sure there were the few misfortunes like the Lindbergh child being kidnapped, but such events were rare, and wherever I lived, I never heard of a kid being abducted, killed, or molested. Never did I heard about such things, until I was in my teens. If those things had been a problem, my Dad or Grandpa would most-likely have said something. Such sadly strange people probably existed, then; nevertheless, they apparently seemed to be extremely uncommon. Today, about three quarters of the people in prison

for sex crimes, having committed the crime against a child! This makes me think that perhaps pedophilia has something to do with the stresses of overpopulation.

That night, I was alone in the old fashioned rectangular wooden box of a train station. The dozen or so wooden benches looked suspiciously like darkly stained well finished church pews, and were no doubt made from the nearby trees. No one stayed with me, but for my benefit, Bull-neck had left the light on in the men's room, with a white and black tin sign over the door, which read, 'Whites Only.' There were no restrooms for blacks, so I wondered where the black porter, I'd meant in the uniform went, while at work. Rummaging around the building, I liberated three cans of beer out of the frig in the station's snack bar, then rifled-through some drawers, until I found the required churchkey to open the steel cans. The day that I left my Grandparent's house, I had been unable to get the bottle of bourbon from under the backyard playhouse and into my laundry-bag, without either Grandma or Bernice seeing me, so I'd left the whiskey bottle hidden below the playhouse for the next summertime visit. My Dad had told me that if a liquor bottle were

well stoppered, it could keep for years. Before leaving, to go to the train station, I'd briefly put the bottle in the sun, before re-corking it, then I stashed it under the playhouse. Later, the lower temperature would draw the cork a little further into the bottle, better sealing it. Dad had taught me that technique. Dad, the other pilots, and the marines used that corking trick, when stashing their whiskey bottles on the islands of the south pacific, when flying missions against the Japanese in WWII. The next summer, the bottle would still be there, and the whiskey would taste perfectly fine.

For a while, I just walked around checking the place, then I stretched-out on a bench. Laying on my side, I saw a large geriatric-looking opossum, amble in, ergo I sat-up on the bench to get a better look at it. My sitting-up allowed it to hear me, and so it turned toward me. The strange creature halfheartedly hissed, raised its left front paw, then it simply turned and leisurely wattled away, into the ladies bathroom… also with a 'Whites Only' sign. The whitish gray rat-like creature, with its ugly white hairy head and hairless tail, going in the ladies room, caused me to laugh, thinking about some unsuspecting lady running into it while sitting on the

toilet, the next day. Likely, the animal was just looking for some water. *I wonder if it drinks water out of the toilet?* To facilitate sleep and to distant myself from the ugly opossum, I got up and picked-out the bench in the darkest corner of the old station-house, furtherest from the ladies room. Laying there in the dark, I was starting to drift off to sleep, when I heard the side door to the train station open, so I laid very still and held my breath. As mentioned, crime wasn't as common, so no one locked their doors, then; still, country folk were generally asleep by that time. I wrongly figured it was a worker from the crash site, returning equipment.

The young couple were clearly drunk, and she was doing a lot of quiet giggling, as he hastily unsnapped the over-the-shoulder straps on the front of his farmer-johns, then pulled off his work boots, and continued to get naked. She did likewise. *Oh my God, she looks great!* She was white and blond and he was black and bold. The two then laid on the first bench, right next to the noisy ice-maker, which turned on an off, all night. Their bench faced my direction, so I had a great view of him snatching off her panties, and everything which followed. My mouth went dry, with a strong taste of copper, as my

underpants tighten.

"That fine pussy ah yours is mine, Baby-Jean!"

"It's all your's Tyrone. Fuck me, daddy."

"That's my name, Baby-Jean! Who's your daddy, girl?" *He's not her daddy!*

"You are, Tyrone! You're my daddy, baby." *Why'd she say that?*

"You damn right, I is, you fine white bitch, you."

"Oh, fuck me good and hard, Tyrone."

"You know I will, Baby-Jean."

From no less than twenty feet away, in the dark, peering between the backs of two benches only two or three inches apart, I bore detailed witness to the live wondrous act of procreation. It was an enlightening thirty minutes or so, punctuated with a few repetitious memorable words, and her delightful primitive melodies of pleasurable passion. *I think that's her I smell, and I love that smell!* The scent and sounds of the woman clearly stirred something primal inside me, cells buried in the ancient portion of my gray matter, stimulating nerves to redirect blood flow in a strategic portion of my anatomy, and though it would be a few years, before I achieved an

actual orgasm, the appendage still functioned. The black guy must have said, “Baby-Jean,” at least fifty times, and Baby-Jean repeatedly said, “Fuck me good, Tyrone,” with lots of trivial words, mixed with the profound molten hot sex.

Afterwards, the couple borrowed the ‘Whites Only’ ladies restroom, but apparently didn’t notice the opossum. *Wonder where that opossum is hiding? Maybe there’s a hole in the wall, in there.* Then as quickly as they had arrived, the couple was gone. Each went out a different door of the station, with her leaving first, then a few seconds later he left. Later, the opossum emerged from the ladies room and hurriedly trotted-off toward the snack bar. My mouth was still dry and tasted like copper, the air was filled with the scent of the woman, my heart was pounding. Although the scene I'd just witnessed elicited strange new feelings, inherently I knew them to be right as rain. Never did I feel the need to ask someone about what I’d seen or how I felt; it was something strangely familiar, like a vague recollection of an extremely pleasant dream. After a moment, I walked over and sniffed at the bench she’d been laying upon, then I touched it, but while the scent still lightly lingered, the warmth of her body

was sadly gone. The womanly fragrance transferred to my fingertips, and inherently I knew that the fragrance was from the provocative region of Baby-Jean.

That night of the sexual encounter would replay dozens of times in my childhood memory, as well as for many nights to come. Just thinking about the scene prevented my sleep, and so I stole and downed two additional *Pabst Blue Ribbons.* I equated that brand of beer with the United States of America and patriotism, since its label was red, white, and blue, and Dad had told me that the trademark predated the American civil war, not-to-mention that the beer company was the major advertiser for all the boxing matches on TV, which Dad and I religiously watched, while sipping that same delicious golden brew. Dad made me feel, as if I was doing something patriotic, by drinking. That beer's television advertising song seemed like the national anthem to me. Sometimes, Mom would stop me from humming the tune, but every addiction has its rituals, which later become its' triggers. Finally, I nodded-out on the bench, till I was awakened early the next morning by the station workers.

https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?hsimp=yhs-att_001&hspart=att&p=1950s+pabst+blue+ribbon+beer+song#id=5&vid=243a2d396f1e3595df5d269f17741b1c

The following afternoon, the train bound for Washington finally arrived. The tall thin very old black man conductor, with a snow white Santa Claus beard and short nappy white hair, approached me. Black men were generally not known for big bushy white beards. His skin was a deep ashen black, the color of dry slightly burned charcoal. He instructed me to get aboard the train. He had a pleasant gentle air about him, and reminded me of Grandma's ultra tall yardman, John. The conductor had an unusual smell about him, so I asked what it was. He smiled and told me it was shea butter, mixed with some vanilla favoring his wife used in cooking. He said he applied it as a lotion, to keep from looking too ashy. *He still looks ashy.* He also said that the shea butter came form the nut of the shea tree, found in West Africa, and was good for skin infections.

"My wife makes it fo me, and she makes a little money sell'n it in the hardware store. Lots of de local niggers buys it. Makes twice what it be cost'n her…

good money, too. Every little bit helps, when yo a nigger in Atmore. Dis railroad job pretty much don't pay not'n." He smiled, again. It was the first time that I'd heard a black person refer to themselves, using the 'N' word. The word coming from the black gentleman shocked me. Through the years, I've noticed that many black people seem to use shea butter soap, not so many whites. I suspected the man was roughly one hundred years old, and if that were true, and since it was then 1954, he'd been a child slave, well before and during the civil war. Most likely, he remembered being a child slave. Perhaps, his early history was why he referred to blacks, using the 'N' word.

In my early childhood, there is a real chance that I'd meant many former slaves, and I hadn't realized it. America's last black slave died in 1971. Sylvester Magee was purported to have been born in 1841 on the, then famous, JJ Shanks plantation. Magee said that he was purchased at the age of 19, just before the American Civil War by plantation owner Hugh Magee at a slave market in Mississippi. If that story of Sylvester Magee is true, he lived to the ripe old age of 130! While that may be hard to believe, I once meant a black woman, who lived for 120 years, and

an old Jewish woman, who died at the age of 110. The latter resided in the same nursing as my mother now does. It's my feeling that the primary reason that some people live so long, besides their genes, clean living, and good diet, is that they tend to love and enjoy people; consequently, they are generally happier.

The next day, on the way to DC, I managed to steal a few beers from the dining car. At one end of the dining car was a kitchen the size of a large wooden packing crate, with a big refrigerator and a tiny stove. Periodically, the cook would also help to serve the food, so I made good use of those serving times to raid his temporarily abandoned refrigerator. The peoples' talking and the rumble of the train, were loud enough, that I didn't have to worry about someone hearing me, opening and closing the frig, or putting four beers in my laundry bag. Periodically, I'd go in the bathroom, lock the door, and sit on the closed toilet lid, to sip the beer. I'd kept the churchkey, from the train station to open them with, and I'd loudly clear my throat as the beer hissed-out its carbonated pressure. There was even a small window in the bathroom to throw out the empties. Littering was not a consideration in the early fifties. I

saved two beers for sleeping that night, since we weren't due to get into Washington, until early the next morning. All my life I've strategized for sleep.

I enjoyed eating in the dining car. The tables were covered in smooth white linen tablecloths, and the diners all used pressed large white cloth napkins. The silverware was sterling and was placed on the tables before the diners arrived, and the plates had the gold leaf initials of the name of the railroad stenciled on them, WB&PL, for Washington, Brandywine & Point Lookout Railroad. The tables on one side of the aisle were designed to seat four, but those on the other side would seat only two, this set-up allowed room for the narrow aisle. The waiter was a short wiry black man, wearing patent leather black shoes, long black pants, a white shirt, with a white short jacket. Like a robot, he'd smile and nod, and repeatedly said, "Yes, Sir," or "Yes, Ma'am," with each ministration. The diners indifferently spoke their orders to him. They'd make their orders while still making eye contact with only the others in their dining party, almost as if the black man wasn't their, and when the waiter served the food, the diners merely leaned back to avoid contact, but again, no eye contact. The passengers were mostly southerners

traveling north to see the sights in the yankee capital, a city designed to intimidate its' visitors.

Later, I went to use the bathroom, and the short stocky black waiter was just coming out the bathroom door, rolling down one of his sleeves. His waiter's jacket was thrown over his left shoulder. From somewhere on his person, a heavy glass syringe fell-free and hit the carpeting, bounced and began to role, with the needle still attached. Luckily, it didn't break, and the needle didn't snag in the carpet. The glass syringe rolled straight to me, so I quickly reached down, picked it up, and handed back to him. The waiter did say, 'thank you,' but the expression on his face was one of unmistakable fear. It wasn't till later, and I'd spoken with Dad, that I understood why.

"It was a needle just like the doctor uses to give you a shot, Dad."

"Yeah… He was likely a heroin addict, Joey. That's why he looked so scared. He could have lost his job, or gone to jail. If it had been a needle for insulin, he wouldn't have shown fear." Dad hypothesized.

"What's heroin, Dad?"

“He pokes that needle into his body, and squirts in his vein a poison, called heroin. That heroin makes him feel real good, but only for a few minutes, but then he will never feel good again, unless he keeps injecting himself with the heroin, over and over again, until the heroin finally kills him. Only a fool ever decides to try heroin. There’s no free lunch with heroin.” Dad cautioned.

“What’s heroin feel like Dad?”

“I don’t know Joey, but it’s supposed to be great, but remember that it destroys you! Never even think about trying it!” Dad responded.

Dad was an excellent teacher. There was no *HIV* in those days, but there was plenty of hepatitis. Luckily, I hadn’t been stuck by the needle. It wouldn’t be for another fifteen years in 1969, that Dr. Blumberg and his colleague, Dr Millman, would invent the hepatitis B vaccine. Everyone should get it, since some of the disease vectors remain unknown. The *US Food and Drug Administration* called it the first ‘anti-cancer’ vaccine, since the prevention of chronic hepatitis B infections results in the prevention of related liver cancer. About 80% of the people with hepatitis B, later develop liver cancer. Approximately half a million people die every year,

because of liver cancer. Thank goodness I didn't prick my finger. Around 200,000 to 300,000 people become infected with hepatitis B in the US, every year, and roughly 4000 to 5000 people die from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma each year.

At the beginning of this chapter, I referred to my having sustained something which approached child abuse, but traveling on a train alone, at age six, was not what, I was referring to. The railroad trip truly wasn't anything but pleasant, and the night in the train station, with the mixed racial couple having sex, was a real eye-opener. What I am referring to as abuse, occurred a few weeks, after returning home. As mentioned, my parents and I lived in the countryside, about ten miles outside of Patuxent River, Maryland, in a comfortable three bedroom two bath home. On most weekends, Mom and I were home, while Dad, then a test pilot, was at work, test flying some seriously problematic experimental aircraft. His life was all about war and flying, and when he came home, it was time to break out the whiskey, but as stated, he was never loud or abrasive, when drinking. According to my Dad's sister, my Aunt, Dad had been a fun-filled wild teenager. But after flying combat in WWII,

participating in the Nuremberg trails, and working intel and recon during Korea, Dad was nothing, if not overly serious. He told only one or two jokes in his entire life, and then, his heart really wasn't into telling them! It was as if he wanted to prove he was still up to the task of humor. Dad barely discussed the wars, and practically said nothing about the Nuremberg trials, only implying that although he was in the Navy, but at the trails, he was then working for the Army, or maybe it was coordinating with Army intelligence.

On the other hand, when we lived in Patuxent, he talked incessantly about flying. Being a test pilot seemed to frequently produce various close calls, where Dad would barely survive. Time after time, he'd almost buy the farm. He would test new aircraft designs, as well as various other experimental modifications made to existing types of airplanes, i.e., different: air frames, engines, instruments, fuels, flaps, elevators, landing gear, etc. He worked long hours, with few days off. There were plenty of screw-ups with those planes: engine mishaps, landing-gear malfunctions, instrument failures, hydraulic and electrical problems, fires, structural problems, etc.

Once, Mom and I went to watch Dad test a new

aircraft. It was a P2V patrol bomber, a submarine-hunter. The new design of the aircraft possessed four engines, but of the two engines used propellers, and the other two were jet engines, so there was a propeller and a jet engine on each wing. The experimental plan was to feather the props (turn-off the propeller engines), and start the jets, while on a low altitude approach for landing. Personally, I never understood the reason for doing something so unnecessarily dangerous, but that was the protocol. The approach was being made over the water, and the beginning of the runaway was just a couple hundred yards, from the shoreline.

http://www.warbirdalley.com/p2v.htm

One of Dad's flying buddies was standing with Mom and I. We were all there to witness Dad execute the above experimental protocol. Dad's fellow test pilot said it would be a snap. He also pointed-out Dad's experimental plane, which was still a few miles off, barely visible above the watery horizon. In accordance with the test protocol, Dad feathered the props, after which, we could heard the jet engines spooling-up. When the jets kicked-in, he was only 50

to 75 feet above the water's surface. But then the jets suddenly went silent. Both had unexpectedly failed. It was a catastrophic power failure, and at that low attitude, there was no time to restart the jets or the props, nor was the plane close enough to reach land, so Dad had no recourse but to ditch. He did manage to get the landing-gear mostly retracted, before making a smooth belly landing on the surface of the water, but the heavy bomber sank quickly. Unlike some planes, the bomber wasn't designed to float. Dad and the plane just disappeared below the surface.

Two-seconds passed, and my Mom let go with an insanely loud scream! She's was actually begging Jesus to save him, and not let him drown. The hairs stood-up on my neck, not from watching Dad go in the drink, but in response to Mom's desperate unexpected crazy scream. Happily, a few seconds later, Dad's head popped-up out of the water, and he waved. *Dad's okay!* Once on the surface, he took-off his helmet and flight boots, let them sink, and started swimming toward shore. It was a long swim, especially in his baggy flight-suit, but he easily made it. Mom and I ran to the shore to greet him, as he trudged out of the water, dripping wet. Mom

wrapped herself around him, yelled that she loved him, and was beside herself with joy.

“Honey, are you all right?” She asked.

“I’m a lot better than that broken old plane.” Dad replied.

“That was pretty hairy, Dad!” I said.

“Like a wild ape!” Dad exclaimed.

During all of Dad’s test flights, never did he bailout, though one day, he said that something had gone wrong with the plane, and the control tower had told him to bail-out. In response, he chopped back on the power, slid-back the canopy, and climbed out on the wing with his parachute on, fully intending to jump, but when he looked down thirteen thousand feet, he changed his mind, and climbed back in the plane, slid the canopy closed, and made a ‘wheels-up’ landing in some farmer’s cornfield. He walked away from it, and so the landing was considered a success. Dad mentioned that he’d decided that it was better to land with the rows of corn, rather than across the rows.

“Any landing you can walk away from is a good landing.” He often stated.

For all of his thirty years of flying, Dad never bailed-out, and so he rode more than a few malfunctioning planes in for crash landings, fields, cleared areas in the woods, hillsides, beaches, etc. Experimental planes weren't known for their reliability. Test flights were pretty-much a crapshoot.

Frequently, when Dad crash landed an experimental plane, he'd come home and say, "I broke the plane, but it didn't break me."

"Well, honey I'm just glad you weren't hurt. I wish the Navy could find something else for you to do. Maybe, you should fly new more dependable planes, like normal pilots." Mom would usually respond.

Nevertheless, parachuting from that plane was the only thing, which I ever heard my father admit to being afraid of; absolutely nothing else phased him. In all other things, he was utterly fearless. So skydiving, was the only way I earned my father's respect. In all other things, I have remained largely a failure in his eyes. But, I was shocked, that he enjoyed the fact that I jumped out of planes. For years, I hid the fact that I skydived, assuming that I'd catch a raft of crap, if they found out. Mom found out about my jumping, by accident. A newspaper

reporter had covered the birthday party of one of our older skydivers. His name was Don Crepts, and he was a regular jumper, every weekend, and even throughout he was in his eighties. The reporter had made photographs of the old man, as well as the rest of us inside the jump plane, right before takeoff. The next morning in the newspaper photo, my face could be clearly discerned in the background. The article and corresponding photo was published in the local section of the *Mobile Register,* and my Mom, who like her mother regularly perused the local section looking for gossip, spotted me in the photo. Of course, she immediately showed the photo to Dad, during their breakfast. Both my parents were shocked, but only Mom tried to make me stop jumping. Dad seemed to be okay with it. After a few close calls, I did stop with 429 jumps to my credit, a small number compared to many jumpers I know.

At age six, the day of my aforementioned pseudo abuse had begun, like any other uneventful Saturday. It was a couple hours after lunch, and the air temperature still seemed to be climbing, so I was thinking about asking Mom, if I could go swimming in the town creek, about a mile from our house, through the woods. To get there, I'd walk along

various paths through fields of Spanish Lace and woods populated by various types of trees and small animals, to another housing area, which bordered one side of the creek. I'd just started the first grade, and soon the seasons would change, and with the cooler temperatures, there'd be less and less swimming in the creek, but then there'd be ice-skating, once it had frozen over. However, ice skating was something I never really enjoyed much, nor have I ever been a fan of cold weather.

In the dog days of summer, you had to watch out for snakes, most especially the poisonous indigenous fat black water moccasins. Some folks called them 'cottonmouths.' I'd generally see one or two, every time I'd swim there. At times, they'd be swimming across the surface, but usually they'd just be sitting along the creek bank. The moccasins seemed to be strong swimmers, If you approached them on land they'd either vibrate their tail like a rattlesnake, yet oddly they had no rattles. If you disturbed them, the cottonmouths would invariably chase you, and they were fairly fast, and so at the creek I always had to remain hyper-vigilant. Sometimes, the venomous black reptiles would be laying on the muddy bottom, just a few feet out from the edge of the shore, where

the water was less than a foot deep. That was their most dangerous location, for there, they were difficult to see, especially if the water was murky after a rain or storm. Once, I was standing in the water, barely out from the shore. The water was only a foot deep. Looking down, I saw a huge thick black moccasin coiled up, directly between my feet. Its' intimidating spade-shaped head was only an inch from the medial arch of my right foot. The snake was apparently asleep; thank goodness. How my presence hadn't managed to have awakened him is a miracle. Fear gripped my soul and I jumped, as far as I could. For that one jump, at age six, I might have qualified for the olympics. The beefy poisonous snake gave chase; first, by violently swimming and slithering on the surface, and then for a few yards on the land, but I escaped unscathed.

The gradual sloping creek bottom had something of a silty, slippery dark clayish bottom. Consequently, when the bottom became stirred-up and the water became turbid, I never risked wading-out into the creek, nor would I walk out of the creek and onto the shore, for fear of stepping on a cottonmouth, concealed somewhere on the bottom. Also, whenever there was glare on the water's

surface, I'd cautiously avoid walking-out from the shore; instead, I'd use an old dilapidated, somewhat twisted, aged grayed wooden dock, complete with a few missing boards, and a ladder attached to its end to get in and out of the water. After a long day of swimming, the dock was great to stretch-out on, relax, and sunbath. The older I get, the less likely I am to do anything which imparts peacefulness, but as a young hyperactive child, I could quickly relax, but just not sleep. Most likely the alcohol of my childhood, damaged the *raphe* neurons of my brainstem, hence to date, I have limited sleeping ability.

Miraculously, none of us kids, who swam and played in the creek, were ever bitten by the plentiful poisonous snakes. However, one of the family dogs was bitten and he died. Both the dog and the snake were swimming, at the time, it happened. The paddling long-nosed dog made the mistake of leaning forward, and biting the snake in its rather thick middle, and so the snake had no choice but to curve its' remaining upper half and bite the dob in the cheek. The snake's fangs remained latched in place, just under the dog's left eye, even after both animals were dead. The shocked dog had released the dying

snake and swam to shore, but the fangs stayed hooked in place. Once on shore, the dog made a few swipes with its left forepaw to remove the snake, but the dogs efforts were to no avail, and so it then began to run to its home, with the dead snake dangling from its face. I could tell that the dog was weakening as it ran. The dog's owner found his dog dead by the front door, with the dead snake still attached. The death of the friendly dog alarmed us, but at the same time, it made the creek more intriguing. As kids, we adopted a look-out policy. One of us would stand up on the dock, and keep an eye-out for swimming snakes, while the rest of us swam. We usually played a game we called, Marco Polo, a type of blindman water-tag, and while we did, the appointed look-out would watch for snakes.

For fear that I'd be banned from the creek, I never told my folks about the snakes, and certainly not about the dog being bitten, and since we lived a mile away and on the other side of the creek, my Mom never heard about it. Mom had more than her share of fears, though her fear of snakes was at the very top of her list of things to be afraid of. She's probably dreamed of the deadly creatures, while she was in her mother's womb, sometime during the

third trimester.

The day of the aforementioned child abuse, Mom was in the kitchen, preparing to cook lunch. I was walking around the backyard, when I heard her suddenly callout, from the backdoor. She crooned out those delightful lyrical words, in her finest genteel southern accent, which fully convinced me, that I was going to receive some sort of delicious treat, which usually translated into baked oatmeal cookies, my favorite.

“Joeyyy. Come on in the kiiitchennn; I have something really speeeciaaal. You’re gonna really liiike thisss! It tastes sooo sooo gooooddaa!”

Mom did have a beautiful voice, and I enjoyed her southern accent. In those days, people in the North, often considered the southern accent to be a symbol of ignorance; whereas, those in the South thought the southern accent to be a courteous smoothing form of speech. It’s all about programing that early brain tissue. Southerners also often perceived a northern accent as being abrasive and rude. Mom only called-out in that tonal sing-song manner, whenever she’d baked something delicious, ergo I happily ran for the house.

My mother is one of those infrequent people, who has a natural mastery of voice, a perfect blend of pitch, volume, and timing, instinctually orchestrated to create an attractive intelligent mellifluous presentation; but usually this sweet quality was utilized to get her way. No doubt, she got the voice manipulations from her Dad, the brilliant attorney. Perhaps my perceptions are simply based upon the fact that she's my mother, and the neurons comprising my fetal brain, became adjusted to her utterances, while yet to be born, but I didn't acquire her sweet southern accent, probably due to Dad's influence.

"Coming, Mooom…" I called back.

Filled with the anticipation of hot oatmeal cookies, my salivary glands were already flooding my mouth with saliva, as I charged into the kitchen, certain that Mom had baked them. Never had she called me, in that manner, if there weren't fresh baked cookies, cooling in the kitchen, and at age six, cookies were a big deal. She could bake them, so they were slightly crisp along the edges, yet they had still somewhat chewy in their centers. To this day, I love freshly baked hot oatmeal raisin cookies. It's a miracle, that I don't have diabetes, but my last A1C

was a 5.2, and so I still eat those cookies, at *May's Bakery* on 12th Avenue and Grand Street. Besides, there's a beautiful black woman, working there, who puts my moral compass in a tailspin.

Coming through the back door, disappointedly my nose was not assailed by the usual aromatic fragrance of fresh bake-goods, and this is the exact point where my story of child abuse begins. Once in the kitchen, instead of finding a batch of warm cookies, Mom handed me a red extra hot habanero pepper. At the time, I'd never seen one, and Mom knew it! The one inch crimson pepper looked harmless enough. It had a shiny smooth surface, like a jellybean, so at first, I didn't think it was plant material. Mom had strategically trimmed off the green stem and its' shoulder, so red pepper appeared interesting.

"What's this thing, Mom?" I asked, rolling it between my right thumb and index finger.

"Oh, Joey that red thing is really delicious, and tastes so so so sweet. You've never eaten anything quite that delicious. Boy, is it good! (This was the beginning of the child abuse, I mentioned!) But now listen Joey, when you eat it, you have to chew it up real fast… fast as you can! And if it seems to warm-

up a little, then chew it even faster to cool it down, and to make it sweeter. You understand? If you don't chew it quickly, you lose the sweet favor, so chew it fast, real fast like a rabbit. That way it will taste even sweeter. The faster you chew, the better it's gonna taste, and don't stop chewing. You're gonna really love it! Now go ahead pop it in your mouth, and chew it fast as you can! Fast like a rabbit!" At that point, Mom even mock chewed, rapidly jacking her jaw up and down, fast as she could, encouraging me to do likewise. *This is going to be great!* Mom had never before played any type of practical joke, and so foolishly I believed her.

"It's a very sweet crunchy fruit; exceptionally delightful food, and tasty. Remember to chew fast, Joey! Go ahead! Just pop it in your mouth and chew real fast! Chew, chew, chew…" Mom cheerily encouraged.

Never before had I received such instructions, on how to eat, but trusting in my loving Mom, per her instructions, I tossed the red habanero into my mouth, and chomped my lower mandible up and down, hard and fast, much like a pneumatic jack hammer, quickly turning the pepper into mush; as a result, I was about to experience my dear mother's ill

conceived painful notion of humor.

It's important to realize, that until that very moment, I'd never eaten much in the way hot spicy food. Grandma's famously delicious crab cakes contained only the tiniest smidgen of tabasco sauce, though I had never seen or tasted a hot pepper. Years later, I heard that the *Guinness Book of Records* would say that the habanero was the world's hottest chili. Some people speculate that the painful pepper can cause a person to release beta-endorphin (a natural endogenous pain killer, many times stronger than morphine), from the pituitary gland under the brain, in response to the oral pain delivered by the pepper, and consequently, the sizzling pepper can be a bit addicting. Lord knows there are plenty of diners, who can attest to said addiction.

As a direct result of what I'm about to describe, I'm currently unable to enjoy hot spicy food, and as mentioned, my dear Mom had never played a practical joke on me. Since then, she's never explained her motivation for committing such a dastardly prank, and it's an unspoken agreement that I'm never to bring it up. Now days, she even convincingly claims that she doesn't recall the prank… selective memory loss. Quite honestly, my

mother may have the world's greatest facility for forgetting, but only those things which make her feel uncomfortable.

Frankly, I'm amazed at what she can forget, and how thoroughly she forgets it. Where her father was absent minded, yet at the same time had the world's finest photographic memory, she can eliminate any memory she choses. Perhaps, in some unusual way, the two traits are similar. Both involve blocking-out things… one blocks external stimuli but remembers everything, the other blocks memories but feels everything. No doubt, both are highly useful traits. All I got from those two was the liar gene, but it's seriously useful.

At times, there's nothing quite as useful as some really solid bullshit.

A Long Life in the DEA, by Agent A. M. Worley

Following Mom's explicit instructions about chewing to pepper, my six year old mouth was suddenly agonizingly ablaze. The lining of my entire oral cavity had turned into a hellish inferno. Five alarm bells were clanging though-out my six year old

cranium! *Damn my mouth hurts!* Immediately, I spit-out the the spicy mash onto the kitchen floor, but even after I'd spit it out, the flames and the pain continued to grow. *I spit it out, so why does my mouth still hurt?* Mom apparently thought my painful condition was the funniest thing she'd ever seen, and began to laugh uncontrollably. Ergo, I was thrown into a state of complete panic, the likes of which I'd never known… a combination of pain and uncertainty. *What the hell is wrong with my mouth and why did Mom do this to me?* My mouth was aflame. It felt like a red hot charcoal briquette had been placed in my mouth, and the pain wouldn't abate. The situation was made even more unbearable, since I had been anticipating a pleasant sweet surprise.

In my six year old mind, my dear Mother had become an insane maniacal lunatic, bent-over at her waist laughing uncontrollably. The growing pains in my mouth, together with the realization that my Mom had lost her mind, totally unhinged me. At the time, I didn't understand the correlation between my painful condition and her laughter. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined that my dear Mother would laugh at my pain. Yet, I have to admit, about thirty-seven years later, I'd give my baby daughter a slice of

lemon, just to watch the puckering expression on her radiantly beautiful little face, still I'd have never given her an excruciating red hot pepper.

Mom got such a kick out of my apparent misery, that she couldn't remotely begin to control herself. Never had I seen her laugh so long and hard! Still bent over at the waist, she warped one arm around her waist, with her other hand on the counter to hold herself up. All she could do was laugh and gasp for air.

"HA, HA, HA, HA… OH MY GOD! HA, HA, HA! Don't worry… HA, HA, HA… it's only temporary, Joey. HA, HA, HA, HA… Don't get mad, Joey! HA, HA, HA,… Oh my God! HA, HA, HA,…, You're gonna be so mad… HA,HA,HA…, etc."

She went on laughing and talking like that, for what then seemed like, forever. At one point, she briefly stopped, and tried to suppress her laughter, but that only lasted for about three-seconds, and then she again lost all control, and exploded laughing again, and again, and again, *ad infinitum*. Undoubtedly, her ribs had to have hurt for days after. All the while, that Mom was laughing, my mouth and lips were on fire, and my dear Mom was enjoying every bit of it.

In my bewilderment and agony, I managed to hurriedly pull open a kitchen drawer, step-up onto it, to quickly climb-up on top of the kitchen countertop, right next to the kitchen sink. Laying on my belly, I twisted my neck, so that my mouth was directly beneath the down curved facet, as I turned on the cold water tap. Repeatedly, I rinsed out my fiery mouth and lips, with the cool water, which did reduce the burning, but as soon as I stopped rinsing, my mouth and lips would start burning, again. This continual reigniting of the pain made my paranoid child's brain begin to believe that my mouth was going to literally burn forever! That thought terrified me. *Has my mouth gone to hell and going to burn forever, and Mom's gone crazy?* In my mind, I was receiving just a taste of hell (pun intended) and Mom was playing the role of Satan, laughing at my pain. There was no help coming from her. Periodically, she seemed to choke and gasp for breath. She had lost it, laughing so hard, that tears were then streaming down her lovely cheeks. I realized that she'd done the hot pepper thing simply to enjoy my pain.

But finally, just as the pain began to abate, and I felt that there might be a light at the end of the tunnel, Mom's laughter caused her to inhale a small

droplet of her own saliva, and she started to violently choke, seriously gasping for air. This is a condition, where if Mom inhales the slightest thing, her larynx spasms close (laryngospasm), and she can't breathe. *That's what you get Mom. You deserve it!* Where others might just cough, my Mom's throat completely closes, so she literally can't inhale. If you're not familiar with this condition, it gives the person, who's watching her, the distinct impression that she's inhaled some large solid foreign object, and is literally choking to death.

Whenever Mom accidentally inhales the slightest amount of something: spit, water, milk, powdered sugar, etc., her larynx spasms close. The harder she tries to inhale, and force air in past her spasming larynx, the worse the condition becomes. I have the same condition, but have learned to control it, by simply trying not to breathe, or breathing more slowly and gently. In other words, if you don't panic and just relax, the airway reopens, in a few seconds. Mom can't do that, she can't stop panicking. Mom was born with more than her share of fear.

One time, Mom had bitten into a powdered doughnut and inhaled the smallest amount of the fine white powdered confection, which triggered her

laryngospasm, and the corresponding violent choking. The loud dramatic show of choking, made it seem like she's truly dying; struggling hard to suck down air, through a mostly closed larynx, creating a loud screeching hornlike sound. It is a loud, remarkably desperate sound, which is always accompanied by a noteworthy display of dread in her eyes. During each and every theatrical, yet harmless, episode, Mom's bug-eyed face is a mask of shear terror.

Another time, while we were dining at a fairly crowded restaurant, Mom sipped some of her ice water and managed to inhale a drop. When her larynx slammed closed, and she began her loud terrified attempts at ineffective inhalation, every diner and employee in the restaurant clearly thought Mom was choking to death on an inhaled chunk of meat. Dad and I were calmly sitting there just watching Mom do her usual histrionic spastic larynx exhibition, but unlike the other people who were watching, we knew she was soon going to be okay. While Mom was in the middle of the dramatic violent choking routine, some man assumed Mom had inhaled food, and yelled to Dad to give her the *Heimlich Maneuver*.

“Give your wife the Heimlich, before she dies man!”

“Don’t worry folks, dying’s no big deal. It’ll all be over soon, and we can call the coroner to come collect the body. So, just go back to eating.” Dad responded, then he laughed, which really seemed to disturb the other diners.

Probably everyone in the restaurant assumed Dad was deranged. A few seconds later, Mom was fine and angry about Dad’s comment. Though definitely dark in nature and not a real joke, it was one of my Dad’s very rare attempts at humor. Unlike my material Grandma, he almost never told jokes. Though he clearly enjoyed people, who expressed humor, he himself had practically none. Most likely, WWII, Nuremberg, Korea, and the pressures of the then ramping-up of the cold war had pretty much destroyed his laughter. Dad had devoted his life to more pressing things, such as the protection of the United States of America. At Pearl Harbor, Dad had seen the enemy up close: bombing, dropping torpedos, and strafing. Through-out most of Dad’s life, he never imaged that the industries, which made the weapons, then used to save his beloved United States, would later become his country’s worst

enemies. Before he died, he admitted it; that the military industrial complex was a looming threat to the safety of the United States, as most of its' citizens assumed it to be.

While his work gave him a sense of fulfillment, the only things which I saw, which brought him happiness were: Mom, dancing, drinking with his pilot friends, and of course flying. After he'd retired, he also enjoyed teaching the neighborhood kids math and poker. Dad was acutely kind to children and young adolescents, always encouraging them, no matter how irritating they might have been.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

Mark Twain

He also loved to teach kids how to mow the grass, how to change the oil, how to change a tire, and how to change the brakes, etc. Something tells me that combat vets tend to have a deeper pedagogical nature, and if they come out of the war psychiatrically stable, they make excellent teachers. Maybe, a warrior is more apt to love children,

because he genuinely realizes that the kids are the future; after all, in a very real way, warriors fight for the preservation of the country's future… the children. At least, they did in Dad's day. Now, many combat soldiers fight only for their comrades in arms, because the political reasons they fight are pure bullshit.

When teaching poker, Dad always stressed the importance of knowing: the odds, when and how to bluff, and how to maintain a poker face. Basically, Dad simply detached for all concern about winning or losing. In reality his teaching me to bluff, taught me how to be a better liar. To Dad a poker face was a myriad of faces, continuously shuffled, so as to be unreadable, or misleading. For Dad, the game of poker was a true art form, a study in subtle aspects of human behavior and cognitive prowess, and not just playing the odds. No one had a better poker face than Dad; his facial muscles gave away nothing, only what he intended. In real life, Dad never bluffed. The pressures in the game of poker were minor, compared to those of war, and so the stress of gambling was comparatively nothing; consequently, winning or losing money held not a candle to those stresses; as a result, bluffing for Dad was nothing.

During war, Dad had faced imminent death many times, so what was the pressure of losing or winning a hand of poker? Nevertheless, there are those strange greedy people, who place the value of money above the value to their life, and the lives of everyone, by continuing to destroy the planet for wealth. Not only that, but they have a huge percentage of the wealth, so that much of the earth's populace is forced to live in abject poverty. Perchance, those folks are the most dangerous fools to have ever lived.

Though a professional gambler, Dad was remarkably tight with his money. He held onto a penny, like a starving pit-bull might hang onto a juicy pork chop. He'd seen the tail-end of the depression, and although his father was an attorney, the man had given-up the practice of law and worked as a common laborer, roofing houses, and running a small brothel, with a half dozen women. Dad not only worked at the whorehouse as a young boy, doing repairs and running errands for the women, but he also collected tons of scrap metal, to supplement his family's income. Needless to say, as a child, he'd seen the seamier side of life, yet he lead his life with integrity and courage. My daughter has

some of those traits.

After about ten minutes of repeatedly rinsing my burning mouth with the cold tap water, the capsaicinoids of the red pepper, were diminished enough that my mouth had at last stopped burning. Once Mom had finally stopped choking, from inhaling her own spit while laughing, and I could see she was okay, surprisingly she again began to start laughing. I didn't understand how all that horrible pain in my mouth could be so funny, and was sadly confused by her strange sense of humor. *What have I done to deserve this?* Angrily, I stomped outside, slamming the back door behind me. *I hate, Mom!*

Wandering around in the yard, I could hear my mother still chuckling inside the house, yet I just didn't get the concept of dark sadistic humor. Yet within a few minutes, I'd completely understand her barbarous humor, since said type of humor was about to be born, within me. It would be revenge at its finest, and I too would soon be laughing, just as my dear Mom, and like her, my ribs would hurt for days.

Mom definitely loved me, and I her, yet she couldn't resist playing the excruciating practical joke. On the other hand, my Dad was always predictable

and fair. I can honestly say that to the very best of my knowledge, my Dad never told a genuine lie, except for bluffing during poker. Few people can make that claim. Dad never lied and I, his son, was a consummate liar. Walking around the backyard, I desperately wanted revenge for the red hot pepper. At that particular moment, I didn't feel a flyspeck of love for her. It was the first time, I can recall being intensely angry with my Mom.

Racking my brain, I couldn't come-up with an idea for revenge; after all, what can one do to their Mom, the most precious being in a child's life? Obviously, if I did anything too drastic, Dad would carry-out justice on my backside, so nothing doable came to mind. I thought about pouring out the perfume from one of her perfume bottles and peeing in the bottle, but her perfume bottles had permanent seals on their tops, with the old spritzer pumps. Then, I thought about peeing in her shampoo bottle, but Dad used the same shampoo, and if he used it and found out it was me, he'd absolutely lay waste to my butt. My hallowed Mom seemed untouchable. To say the least, I was desperately racking my brain for some sort of revenge. *What can I do to her?*

That's when the Lord himself, for I actually

thought he might exist at age six, provided me with my much needed means of retribution. It was to be revenge, with real panache. I was going to positively terrify my Mom, without physically harming her, and without the pain, as she'd inflicted upon me. Yes, said revenge had to have been the great Lord God's doing, since the timing was too flawless, and the means of the revenge too perfect. My potent instrument of vengeance literally materialized right out of nothing, magically appearing right before my eyes.

As I was standing in the backyard, racking my brain for a means of retaliation, suddenly I saw it, something moving, where there had been nothing a second before. At first, it was difficult to discern what it was, for it only looked like a strip of bright green grass was moving independent of the rest of the grass in the lawn. A thin section of the green grass was magically transforming into something! It was coming alive, right before my eyes. Then, I recognized this unusual perception was in fact a beautiful bright green grass snake, which was perfectly camouflaged. The snake was moving through the yard, right in front of me. *Holy Shit! This snake has been sent to me by God!* Unlike the

dangerous fat venomous black water moccasins in the nearby creek, this thin bright green snake was a friendly, completely harmless little creature. Grass snakes can only wiggle a lot, and they're known to never bite, except to eat the tiniest insects. As a young child, I'd handled them many times. Sometimes, the grass snake would attempt a bite, but its mouth was so soft, and its' jaws so weak, it didn't hurt in the least. There was no doubt, God had single-handedly provided me with the consummate instrument of righteous payback. *Thanks God; the snake is perfect.*

Snatching-up the green serpent off the grass, I instantly headed for the kitchen and Mom. *Hallelujah!* Long before I entered kindergarten, it was Dad's idea that I had memorize all the snakes contained within the pages of a book about the snakes of North America. He'd brought the snake book home, and thanks to Dad's unique teaching methodology, I'd developed a burning desire to learn. But this longing to know things was probably not based on some innate curiosity, but rather on the desire for alcohol.

My alcohol consumption had begun just before I had reached the tender age of six months; perhaps

even earlier. When Mom told me about my early childhood alcoholism, she initially had said I was three months old; then later, when she retold the story, she had changed it, to say that I'd begun drinking when I was six months old. Still later, she'd claim that she had no recollection of my drinking as an infant. As mentioned, Mom's mind is fully capable of eliminating whatever memories, make her feel uncomfortable. My alcoholism actually may have started before I was born, since Mom was a moderate to light drinker, during her pregnancy. In those days, drinking during pregnancy was thought to be okay.

Most likely, my postpartum addiction started one afternoon, when Dad was home from work. Mom told Dad that she was sick and tired of washing glass baby bottles, and that she wished that I would hurry-up and learn to drink from a cup. In the late 1940s, there were no plastic baby bottles with disposable liners, nor were there disposable diapers. Mom washed the cloth diapers in the bathtub with soap and bleach. While I was growing-up, she repeatedly reminded me of what an unpleasant smelly chore washing the diapers had been. The bottles had to be washed in the sink, using a bottle bush. In response to Mom's bottle washing complaint, Dad proudly

proclaimed that he could solve the bottle washing problem, since he knew all too well, the attraction an alcohol buzz could quickly engender.

"You hate washing those baby bottles? I can take care of that minor problem, Honey. I'll teach this baby to drink, without using the baby bottle. Learning to drink from a can is as good as drinking from a glass." I was later told, Dad had supposedly said.

At that time that my love of alcohol first began, Dad had been cradling me in the crook of his left arm, feeding me my baby bottle. During this process, he'd periodically set the baby bottle down, and take a sip from his beer can, which rested on the end table. To solve Mom's problem with having to clean baby bottles, Dad just tilted my head back, and began to gently pour a few drops of the heady golden brew into my open infant mouth, which according to Mom, was then periodically trying to nurse the edge of the metal rim of the *Pabst Blue Ribbon* can. Mom later told me that within just a few such lessons, I had learned to drink from the cold metal beer can, and the transition to a cup soon followed. Dad could tell I enjoyed the beer; correspondingly, it dawned on him that because of its corresponding buzz, the beer

could be used as a powerful learning motivator. Alcohol wasn't considered an unhealthy thing in those days, and Mom was indeed happy, as a clam at high tide, that she could discard those troublesome baby bottles. Albeit Dad smoked cigars, cigarettes, and pipes, he didn't start me smoking, as a teaching tool. I was truly lucky, since tobacco wasn't considered unhealthy back then, either.

"Joey, you just took to drinking your Dad's beer, like a fish takes to water. From then on, you and your Dad drank beer, every evening, after he got home from work, and on the weekends, if he was off work. You were drinking buddies, and you sure loved that beer. Ha, ha! Beers good for you… kills worms. You always looked forward to your Dad getting home, cuz you knew it was beer time. You'd acted so funny, when you got drunk. After you learned to walk, your Dad and I loved watching you stumble around the living room, drunk. You were my little drunk sailor." Mom mused, but as stated, she later claimed that she had no recollection of my early drinking.

"You know, your Dad used beer to get you to learn lots of stuff, Joey. He started out teaching you to say words, just like he was teaching a parrot. *Gee,*

thanks Mom. Then using the beer as a reward, he got you to start speaking short phrases… repeat after me type of stuff. He had you speaking in full sentences by the time you are ten months old. The beer didn't seem to hurt you any. You turned-out fine. Except you don't sleep so well, but that's no big deal." Mom had told me this interesting fact about my early years, while Dad nodded, corroborating its' truthfulness.

The insomnia was not the only thing I suffered in response to the childhood drinking. I regularly hallucinated, usually a couple of times a day; nevertheless, the hallucinations don't bothered me. Only once have I had an unpleasant hallucination, and it was very brief. Now in old age, I don't have them as often, and I sincerely miss them, since they break the day-to-day monotony. There are a few other aspects to my brain damage, not worth the mention.

So, there was no more washing baby bottles for Mom. Many times, throughout my life, Mom would hammer me about that unpleasant task, she performed on my behalf. She never mentioned anything about carrying me for nine months, or birthing me, but the bottles and the diaper washing

had plainly traumatized her. I once asked her about my birth and she couldn't recall it, displaying her selective memory loss. It was Dad, who told me that my delivery had been long and hard.

Because of Dad, I had learned to appreciate a good beer buzz, and became a fledgling drinker. Correspondingly, I came to be an apprentice student, at the tender age of less than six months. Dad discerned that since beer had facilitated my learning to drink from a cup, it might also be used to teach me other things. Mother Teresa used pieces of bread to entice the starving children of Calcutta to learn, and my Dad had used sips of beer. Whatever reward works, I suppose. While I do believe, my childhood drinking gave me some form of brain damage, I also feel that it gave me some unique abilities.

Now some of you might think that my Dad giving me booze was abusing me, but in those days, it was considered good fun to get your kid drunk, and watch how ridiculous they'd act. While ignorance of the law is no excuse, ignorance of science is. No one knew about the childhood neurophysiological damage, induced by alcohol. The only unusual things, I've noted about myself, is that I: periodically hallucinate, can't sleep well, lack

patience, am easily bored, become highly paranoid at times, didn't develop a real conscience until I was in my early forties, and I'm an extremely bad writer. The poor writing is almost entirely due to my lack of patience, and so I can't edit my work; it's simply too tedious. There's nothing remotely interesting about rewriting an idea. Correspondingly, the problem with these books is that I have a lot I want to say, ergo it'll be too much material to have to rehash.

Throughout my life, for as long as I can recall, my hallucinations have almost always been refreshingly evocative, and unlike those of a schizophrenic, I always known the difference between hallucinations and reality. These mental aberrations are truly enjoyable, largely because, as stated, they're a break from the humdrum, and far too much of life is humdrum. Rarely, have I run into someone with this condition. Also, music may sometimes evoke visual images, a common form of synesthesia. The movements of things in the hallucination, often take place with the rhythm of the music, and so it can be like watching a weird musical. I have no interest in ninety percent of the movies, or any of the musicals; I just don't see the point.

Nevertheless such hallucinations are wonderfully engaging. Rarely have I had any auditory hallucinations, and schizophrenics mostly have auditory hallucinations. The few auditory hallucinations I've experienced, have been fictitious radio sports broadcasts, describing the action of a professional baseball game or boxing match, and one other time, it was the sound of a large group of people just talking about various random things, interesting, but nothing of any great importance.

"The batter swings…and it's a hard ground ball, down the third base line. Smith is going for second. Jones babbles the ball. Now, he's got it, and there's the throw for second. It's gonna be close…"

My visual hallucinations most often occur in the evenings and are generally quite unusual, and always unexpected. But while I have no bad hallucinations, save one, and have no genuine schizophrenia, I do have one other clear symptom of schizophrenia, and that is the aforementioned paranoia. Often the paranoia has to do with people, who are possibly planning or plotting against me, but aren't. Usually, after I've gotten to know someone, I no longer feel paranoid about them. Still, I've probably abandoned more than the occasional friend, due to paranoia.

Simply put, paranoia is having unrealistic fears. It's a bit like being a dreamer, in that the fears in a dream will never really harm you, but they are nonetheless frightening. In actuality, excessive fear is often only certain portions of gray matter, which may be larger and/or more active, and/or less inhibited. My Mom's fear of snakes is her second worst fear. Her greatest fear would be realized late in her life. Dad was afraid of nothing, except for bailing-out of a defunct aircraft, and I'm afraid of far too many things to begin to list, here.

Unfortunately, the older I get, the fewer my hallucinations, yet sad to say, the burdensome paranoia persists. If only it could be the other way around. Fewer hallucinations are one of the things, which I hate about growing old. The visual hallucinations have existed, for as long as I can remember. The first hallucination I can recall was seeing large flying frogs moving through the paint on the living room wall, is that you're instantly, you're transported beyond the tedium. It's sort of like some really good special effects in a movie.

About one-third of my hallucinations are truly beautiful, if not highly exotic, women. Therefore, if you're a heterosexual man or lesbian, you no doubt

can understand why I love hallucinating. These imaginary women are far better looking than those, who actually walk the earth… perfect skin, hair, hot figures, large eyes and sculptured lips, etc. They're often dressed provocatively, which translates into little to nothing. Many times, I've looked down a dimly lit street or in my darkened room, and my mind has turned a: mailbox, garbage can, chair, lamp, shadow, etc., into an exquisitely beautiful female. I've looked at a terry cloth towel or at the smoke coming-up from a pile of burning leaves, and there appears countless alluring women, etc. In truth, I simultaneously realize that I'm looking at some plane object, and that the woman is a wonderful hallucination; still, I greatly enjoy it. Most likely, this phenomenon is how sex starved sailors looked at dolphins, and saw mermaids.

The moment Dad realized that I, as a very young child, enjoyed beer, he knew that he'd hit upon my incentive for learning, and thus was born my burning desire to learn. Mom refused to give me beer, but she certainly didn't stop Dad; especially, since I could then drink milk from a glass, rather than from the glass baby bottles, which Mom had to wash. In addition, once I was drunk and asleep, Mom had

more free time to spend with Dad, and it was more than obvious they loved each other.

For a while, my beer drinking was interrupted by Dad going to the Korean War. But I have no firm recollection of his leaving, and Mom refuses to discuss this piece of my childhood, ergo I've wondered, if I didn't endure withdrawals. Mom has told me that I once had to be hospitalized for two days, supposedly due to the flu. Without Dad, I probably didn't receive my daily allotment of booze. Boy, did I look forward to Dad getting home! When the Korean conflict finally ended, Mom and I lived in Monterey, California. One day, she drove us down to the Naval docks to meet the ship, bringing Dad home. I was almost five, and soon would be going to my first visit at Grandparents' house, where I'd make the previously mentioned bomb. When hundreds of men were disembarking, all dressed in their uniforms, I picked-out my wonderful Dad, from a three hundred yards away, even before Mom had spotted him. Mom said I went bananas, upon seeing Dad. Early in life, I realized that Dad had my best interests at heart; whereas, even though Mom loved me, I usually felt I was an inconvenience.

Once Dad had returned, we went back to

indulging in our daily beer ritual. The beer bonded us, beyond the usual father-son bond. It made us sort of like buddies. When I'd hear the hiss of the church key depressurizing the old steel beer can, I knew school was in session. Back then, beer cans didn't have pull tabs. And they couldn't be crushed with a gentle squeeze.

Before Dad went to Korea, he would hold me in his lap, open some book, one with pictures, and begin the day's lesson. He started with the encyclopedia, pointing at pictures and trying to get me to pronounced whatever thing or animal was in the photograph. This early alcohol-motivated teaching technique might have been Dad's greatest gift to me, but his most notable traits were his courage and integrity, of which I'm afraid I got far less. In place of actual courage and wisdom, I employed planning and quick thinking. For years, I've deceived myself into thinking of wisdom as a form cleverness. I've falsely defined courage as the ability to quickly adapt to the unexpected, combined with trying to predict future outcomes to any given scenario, which I foolishly managed to get myself involved with. But, true wisdom better insulates the person from encountering the undesirable, and

courage allows one to better defend noble ideas.

Nevertheless, I have known many wise and brave people, who generally lead horribly boring lives. That's not to say that they didn't enjoy their life, or their lives were not of significance, but it is to say that if their life were mine, I'd have hated living it. And while clever people tend not to be as bored, they are often far better acquainted with trouble, but often better equipped to handle it. With regards to courage, I don't believe I honestly have any bona fide form of what most people think of as courage, at least before my child was born. Loving someone gives you a visceral form of courage.

With me in his lap, and a can of cold beer, Dad would open a book. Most often, it was a volume of the *World Book Encyclopedia,* or a geography book, or one filled with maps, or his favorite… a book about planes. He also used books about animals (fish, snakes, birds, etc.). He'd thumb through the pages, until he come-upon a: photograph, map, diagram, drawing, etc. For example, it might have been a photo of an animal, with its name printed underneath. Dad would first point at the animal's photo.

"Wow! You see that animal, Joey? Just look at

the fur and its' color."

"Yes, Dad."

"That animal is an aardvark." He'd ever so slowly and carefully pronounce the word.

"See the word aardvark, printed right here under the photo, Joey?"

"Yes, Dad."

He'd spelled it, point-out each individual letter, as he carefully pronounced each letter. Dad was a patient and enthusiastic teacher.

"A-A-R-D-V-A-R-K… aardvark… Can you say aardvark, Joey?"

"Avark!" I might have attempted, trying desperately to get my reward of a sip of golden effervescence.

"No Joey. Aard…vark. Don't forget to also say vark. Aard… vark!"

"Aar Varr" I might have said, hoping for the golden elixir.

"Almost Joey… You almost got it! Good boy! Now listen closely, aarddd varkkk… aardvark!" With the greatest encouragement in his voice, he would

carefully enunciate each syllable.

"Aardvark" I'd at last correctly utter.

"Yes! Yes, Joey! Good boy! Good boy! You did it! Good boy! Here you go." Dad would heap on the praise, as he administered the cold golden alcoholic prize.

And along with that glorious sip of barley and hops, came the magnificent cerebral beer buzz, firmly associated with my verbal accomplishment and the knowledge of what the aardvark looked like. I also enjoyed the accompanying belch. I recall that the belch also elicited its own form of pleasure. "Good burp there, Joey!" Dad would say.

After my sip, Dad would gulp some himself, and let out a loud burp, himself, and then he'd turn the pages till he found another suitable photo, my next lesson. Sometimes, before moving on to the next photo, Dad would expound a bit on what was in the photograph. When you think about it, it was more than humorous trying to teach a kid, whom you were slowly getting drunk, to properly pronounce words, but that is how, my Dad instilled in me, the love of learning. How well I can recall being confused, yet still trying to succeed for the beer, and his words of

praise.

The beer school would last about a half hour or so, usually covering about twenty items per session: numbers, colors, animals, plants, mechanical devices, different types of airplanes (Dad's favorite), tools, countries of the earth (One of Dad's favorite countries was China: bodies of water, population, names of cities, foods, customs, history, etc.), rivers, large lakes, famous people, planets, etc. Dad was also all about math. As a young child, math mostly took the form of simply learning to add first one, then two, then three digit numbers in my head, then came memorizing the multiplication tables, including the twelves.

At some point, the learning would have reached a point of diminishing returns, and Dad would carry me in my bed, gently close my door, then he was off to find Mom for some entertainment. I can vividly recall, at an early age, how Dad would silently sneak-up behind Mom, whisper in her ear, and gently grope certain aspects of her feminine anatomy, while Mom would softly smile, turn and caress his face, and then they'd retire to their bedroom. That parental harmony made me feel happy and secure. Clearly, I remember being pleased that they loved each other.

As the days passed, and my liver became more adept at synthesizing the necessary alcohol dehydrogenase, my brain learned to work around the buzz, so the lessons became longer, ergo my alcohol consumption grew, yet once Dad could tell I was snookered, I'd be put to bed.

Ten years later, that parental bliss morphed into pleasantries and tolerance, but not nearly as passionately joyful. Dad's job had become extremely demanding. After WWII, and Korea, Dad had a lot to do with intelligence. Most days, he be up at 4 a.m., and not get home till late. He'd come in the house looking stressed to the max, with darkness around his eyes, completely distracted, and smelling of sweat and coffee. He'd shower and hit the rack, as he put it. Dad often operated in a state of near total exhaustion. His eyes were red rimmed, and his patience ceased to exist. He wasn't a mean man, but he could be harsh sometimes; not physically, but he could do a long slow burn, that lasted for days, when it came to my childhood antics.

As a very young child, perhaps the one book that Dad and I enjoyed the most was the previously mentioned book about the snakes of North America. We'd look at the colorful drawings of each type of

snake, since color photography didn't come along, until around 1959. How well I recall marveling that artists could draw an animal so exactingly. Turning from page to page, Dad and I would set about memorizing such things as whether it was poisonous or not, its size, its diet, its scale patterns and coloration, its environmental habitat, and the region(s) the snake resided within the borders of the US. Each type of snake would have a small map of North America, with a shaded region corresponding to its' habitat.

Since Dad had made me memorize all the states and their locations, he'd sometimes quiz me about which states a given snake might inhabit, corresponding with the shaded region. Or, Dad would pick a state and ask me, what snakes inhabited that state. Dad took a lot of time discussing maps, what was north, east, south, and west, what the north and south poles were, what was true versus magnetic north, how to properly orient your position on a map, etc. He'd brought home a compass, and next to my hallucinations, the device seemed to be magical. Dad taught me how to use a compass with a map, even some of the basics of navigation by the sun and stars, in conjunction with the date and time

of day. I've forgotten most of those early lessons, but I've always loved the maps. Now everyone has access to *Google Earth.*

When my Dad was still a young child, before moving to California, and his Dad, my Paternal Grandpa, opened the aforementioned house of ill-refute, Dad first lived in a shack-like house out in the middle of nowhere, on the blazing hot Arizona desert, and in 1919, when Dad was born was a flyspeck on the map. His family's home had no heat to fight off the cold nights, nor air-conditioning to deal with the scorching heat of the days. For a hobby, Dad collected rattlesnakes, and the poisonous beaded black and orange gila monster lizards. That may be why he enjoyed the snake book, so much. It seems people tend to enjoy those things, which they enjoyed in their youth. Gila monsters are now endangered, simply because the farmers have killed so many of them. Dad told me that he once had owned 27 rattlesnakes. As a boy, he roamed the Arizona desert in searching for the creatures. He built their pens from scraps of wood and old discarded windows and screens. Dad was an extremely resourceful and careful person, and never was bitten, even though he handled the poisonous reptiles

thousands of times.

During the snake book lessons, Dad would include tidbits about his adventures catching the rattlesnakes, how he'd handled the dangerous poisonous creatures, how to milk their poison, and how he had cared for them. Dad had raised chickens, so he would have eggs to feed to the snakes. Rattlesnakes would swallow the chicken eggs, without breaking them; shell and all in one long slow continuous gulp, by unhinging their jaw, and breathing through their nose when their mouth was blocked by the egg. Dad also had a pen for the poisonous orange and black Gila monsters. He fed them mice, and once a month he also feed them an egg. All of Dad's pets were poisonous reptiles, but they were creatures of dependable habits, their dangerous predictability. Myself, I prefer dogs.

Dad explained to me that with few exceptions, the poisonous snakes had a fatter, more spade-shaped head, to accommodate the poison glands, and that the non-poisonous snakes tended to have more narrow heads. But that description of the poisonous head didn't apply the coral snake, which he explained was highly poisonous, yet still had a narrow head. He taught me the old saying, about

‘ROY’… “Red on yellow, kill a fellow.” As a result of Dad’s teachings, I never developed a fear of snakes, but unlike Dad, I never really enjoyed the snakes, other than to observe them.

That day, when I was wondering around outside our house in Maryland, still mad at Mom, for giving me the red-hot pepper and burning my mouth, and God had just given me the harmless little green grass snake, I knew that my prayers had been answered. My lovely caring mother was deathly afraid of many kinds of animals, but the snake was by far Mom’s worst nightmare, the harmless green snake was the perfect instrument of revenge. Mom was terrified of any animal that was lower than a dog on God’s chain of evolution.

In my mind, arguing against evolution is like arguing that gravity doesn’t exist, or thinking that we don’t need oxygen to live. It’s akin to saying that the earth is flat. Wake-up! Ignorance, based on fear, dies a slow irritatingly death, if it dies at all. It seems to me, that God and evolution are all tied-up with the ego needing something to look forward to after its’ dead. Death is scary, as might be the idea of nothingness, but neither is as fearsome as the religious man’s fictional hell. Leave it to the religious

control freaks to invent such an unpleasant scenario. Fanatics do so seem to enjoy their fear-based modicum of power… threatening folks with the idea of burning forever.

"Yah, but what if I'm right, and there is a hell?" They do so love to threaten.

It's just amazing how many southern baptists don't believe in evolution. Early and intense devout brain washing, together with a few idiotic religious wanta-be scientists, have produced these backward thinking peoples. Plus, understanding science is so much harder than is understanding what's written in the Bible, and who wants to have to study; especially, if you're on the left side of the bellcurve. Down here in the deep south, almost once a week, I meet someone, who claims the earth is no more than six thousand years old, because of various things they've read in the Bible.

The Bible, Genesis 1: 1-5, says that the earth was created on the first day of creation. From there, one can calculate the age of the earth. The age of the earth can then be estimated by taking the first five days of creation (from earth's creation to the creation of Adam), then following the genealogies from Adam to Abraham (Genesis 5 and 11), and add the time

from Abraham to today. Adam was supposedly created on the 6th, so there were five days before his existence. If one adds up the dates from Adam to Abraham, it's about 2,000 years, using the Masoretic Hebrew text (the old Hebrew and Aramaic text of the 24 books of Tanakh for Judaism. It was primarily copied and edited by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes around the 7th and 10th centuries), Genesis 5 and 11. Whether Christian or secular, many people think that Abraham lived around 2,000 B.C. (4,000 years ago), and so the very simple (minded) addition is: 5 days + 2000 years + 4000 years = barely over 6000 years.

Two of the silly folks, who came-up with this ridiculous estimate of earth's age are Dr. Floyd Nolan Jones, and an earlier book by Archbishop James Ussher, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Two guys, versus thousands of highly educated scientists; take your pick! Down here in the South, there are still scientifically uneducated people, who actually believe the earth is only 6000 years old. I've actually meant these guys. Just look how long it took to get the religious folks to agree that the universe doesn't orbit around the earth. They may have been good and kind people, but so were most of the people

918 people, who followed Jim Jones, and drunk the fatal purple *Kool-Aid,* in Jonestown, Guyana. Being a good person doesn't mean they're also intelligent.

A long time ago, there were those church members, who burned disbelievers at the stake. It's time that such people use their brain for something other than to blindly follow, and begin to question things, and don't just continually strive to desperately substantiate their flimsy beliefs. People need to seek the truth in more than one location, but wherever it lies. The world is filled with these religious people: christians, muslims, Hindus, buddhists, Bahai's, Confucianists, Jews, Shintoists, Taoists, Zoroastrians, Zionists, etc., and each knows they're right, and that the others are wrong. Moreover, each group has it's geniuses, since brilliance certainly doesn't dispel fear.

No doubt some of those Jim Jones believers were positive that they were correct in believing and drinking their poison, though most likely others had to be encouraged, much as does the southern Baptists, the Catholics, the Muslims, the Jews, the Hindus, or for that matter almost every other organized religion. By the same token, every atheist is also certain about the nonexistence of God, yet they can't explain the origin of matter. Of course, not

being able to explain, where all the matter came from, doesn't mean there's a God, but it sure implies the possibility. Nevertheless, if there is a God, I've wondered if said God is responsible for any of the popular religions. For some reason, I feel like that, if there is a God, said God is nothing remotely close to anything described in any religious text.

My Mom is even terrified of birds; yes, birds. Once, a tiny brown sparrow got into our house and Mom ran outside, screaming at the top of her lungs, arms flaying the air above her head, as if the teeny wispy winged creature was attacking her, which it wasn't. You'd have thought it was a crazed giant pterodactyl. She stayed at the neighbor's house, until Dad got home to shoo the harmless diminutive creature out of the door. After Mom ran out of the house, I sat in the living room, studying the delicate brown bird. It looked terrified, and sat on top of a living room curtain. *It wants to get out of the house, just like Mom.* Occasionally, it would fly from the curtain top to the top of the breakfront, then back. It was clear the bird was frightened about being stuck in the house, but when I opened the door for it to exit, the animal couldn't seem to figure-out how to make good its escape. Later, I asked Mom why she

thought the sparrow was a danger.

"It's not a danger. I knew it wouldn't hurt me." She replied. *So, why is she afraid of the bird?*

The logical part of her mind knew the bird was harmless, so I questioned her what she thought the bird would do to her. Her only explanation was that it might have gotten tangled in her hair. *So what?* She knew the bird was harmless, yet it still terrified her. My excessive paranoia undoubtedly came from Mom's side of the family. However, my paranoia is a bit different, in that many things, when most normal people are fearful of, I am not, or I have little fear of them. My paranoia orbits around people, and what their intentions might be.

"Has a bird ever gotten tangled in your hair, Mom?" I asked.

"No! But it could! And, just imagine if it were a bat instead of a bird! Oh my God!" She nonsensically replied, then shivered a little, the same type of shiver that Grandma dramatically used, when taking about black people and their plethora of germs. *Mom's a little crazy, just like Grandma!*

Aside of my own bouts of paranoia, Mom and her episode with the sparrow was the first time I'd

actually witnessed such a severe irrational fear. At the time, I first wondered if Mom wasn't acting, but upon realizing that she was serious, I felt a bit unstable, since Mom was part of my psychological foundation.

I knew that if a bird could do that to Mom, the grass snake was going to push her completely over the edge. She couldn't even stand to look at the pictures of the snakes in Dad's book about the snake of North America. Nothing struck terror into my mother's limbic brain like a snake. For Mom, the snake was truly the devil incarnate, Satan come to life in animal form. For Mom, a snake took fear to a whole new dimension.

Due to the tiny evil red pepper, my mouth still didn't feel quite right. And now, God had laid at my feet the beautiful, harmless, green grass snake, my potent instrument of retaliation. With snake in hand, I headed for the house, and at that very moment, I again heard Mom still chuckling in the kitchen. Her chuckle wildly coincided with my determination to lay complete and utter waste to her psyche, with the harmless little serpent.

My dear Mother feared snakes so much that once, when traveling in Florida, we (Mom, Dad, and

I) stopped at a reptile farm, and while Dad and I went in to see the alligators, lizards, and snakes, Mom waited in the stiffing hot car, refusing to come inside. After Dad told her that it was safe and that all the reptiles were in cages and pens, Mom still wouldn't venture inside, saying that one of them might get loose, and she just couldn't risk it.

"You must think I've lost my mind, if you think that I'd go inside a place with snakes and alligators in it!" She spoke to Dad.

Dad and I went inside the series of makeshift buildings to look at the various snakes, witness the snake handlers, milking the poisonous snakes of their venom, and then out of the main building to look at the estuaries filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of alligators. Now days, certain snake venoms are used in research. At one point in the reptile show, they asked for a volunteer, so Dad picked me up and put me on the plywood stage, then the handler wrapped me a beautiful eight foot black indigo snake. Since I had absolute faith in my Dad, and knew that type of large snake was utterly harmless, and so remained nonplused. The shiny black animal's caresses were gentle, and seemed friendly, yet in reality, it was a cold-blooded predator, enjoying the

benefit of my body heat. While the poikilothermic creature had no emotional feeling for me, I nonetheless liked the snake. By the time we finally returned to the car, Mom desperately needed to pee.

“Well, Honey there’s a bathroom just inside the front door.” Dad suggested, pointing back at the entrance to the reptile building.

But Mom, being deathly afraid of snakes, still refused to enter, ergo she was forced to hold back her discordant bladder, till we’d driven to the nearest gas station, which was like ten minutes away. For Mom to ignore the call of nature required supreme concentration, likely directly proportionate to her fear of snakes. She was literally dancing in the car seat, by the time we arrived at the gas station, where she immediately leaped from the car, while it was still barely moving, and she headed straight for the bathroom. She almost made it, but her external urethral sphincter slightly fumbled the ball, just shy of the goal line. As it turned-out, she had to washout her underpants in bathroom sink of the gas station. Dad ordered me not to say a word.

“Oh Lord, here comes your mom and I’ll bet that’s her underwear balled-up in her hand. Oh Lord, she probably peed her pants. Don’t you dare say a

word to her, Joey, and don't you laugh, either! We stayed too long at the reptile farm. It's our fault." Dad sternly lectured me.

So, the day when I spied the grass snake, I knew that God had placed at my disposal the ultimate weapon of Mom's psychiatric destruction. Peeing in her perfume bottle was nothing compared to the snake. The grass snake and I were fixing to lay claim to my dear Mother's very soul. Because of the red hot pepper, I was going to terrify absolutely her! *Thank you God. No one is better at revenge than you; after all, you allow people to burn forever.* The green creature was about sixteen inches in length and about as thin as one of those thick first grade pencils. Concealing the twisting green grass snake against my side, I strolled back into the kitchen with my opposite side, facing Mom. I tried to look nonchalant, using the poker face Dad had taught me. Mom glanced at me, and was still chuckling.

"Ya see! I told you, Joey, it (the burning in my mouth) was just temporary, HA, HA, HA… It was just a red hot pepper, and a pepper won't really hurt you. HA, HA, HA… It was just a red pepper!" She laughed.

The water was running in the sink, and Mom just

kept her back toward me, and continued to scrub some celery stalks with a curved brush. That day, my lovely Mom was wearing her low-cut light blue summery seersucker dress, which from the waist up fit very snuggly, and from the waist down, it was light weight and billowy. The outfit ran down to just shy of Mom's knees, and above, left her shoulders and upper back bare. The top of the dress covered most of her breasts, but in the back Mom was thin enough that the material, spanned a significant gap, right between her protruding shoulder blades.

The cut of her dress and my Mom's lumbar curve created something of a hollow compartment that ran from between her slightly prominent shoulder blades, down her back, to her slim waist, where the dress material fit snugly around her trim midsection. That space between her shoulder blades and extending down to her lower back, formed the perfect reptile cache.

As if I was Michael Jordan or Dwyane Wade Jr., I charged the goal for a slam dunk, and with a rolling flick of my wrist, I flung the scaly wiggling green reptile, down between her shoulder blades and into said compartment. The snake was immediately jammed tight between the fabric of Mom's dress, and

the skin of her lower back, just above her waist. *Holy shit! This is gonna be amazing! Thank you God!* Quickly, I darted away to the other side of the kitchen, since I knew Mom's reaction was going to be nothing short of explosive; nevertheless, I was wholly unprepared for the magnitude of what was about to erupt. At first, Mom just made a slight wiggle, then with a smile, as she calmly asked.

"What did you put down my back, Joey?" *She doesn't know what it is.*

"A snake." I honestly replied. *This is gonna be bad!*

But for a couple of seconds, she showed no reaction. *Oh no, maybe she's lost her fear of snakes.* Initially, Mom seemed to be completely unaffected. *What happened to her fear of snakes?* Next, she spoke-up, confidently.

"You did not. Now, what did you put down my dress?" She asked.

Initially, she clearly hadn't believed me, when I'd told her that it was a snake. In her mind, she clearly assumed no one would do something so cruel; certainly not her own child. She just figured that I had put some inanimate object down the back of her

dress, and that I was only joking, trying to scare her about it actually being a snake. But then, Mom suddenly stopped talking and her face displayed an expression of wonderment. She blinked twice, and her face suddenly crumbled with profound fear. *She feels the snake moving!* At first, her mouth came wide open, yet no sound emerged, then she oddly looked from side to side.

Evidently, the snake had begun to squirm, and Mom had felt it move. That moment was followed by the finest example of *Quid pro Quo*, known in the history of the world. This was better than Hiroshima, the Battle of Troy, the revenge of the forty-seven Ronin, the French Revolution, Parker's Revenge, etc. This was a true eye for an eye… the code of Hammurabi in spades. It was the red hot pepper vs. the snake, and I was going to have my revenge.

The calm of my happy home was instantly and violently shattered, as an unbelievably fierce earsplitting primeval scream exploded past my Mom's lovely lips! It was so loud that deaf people in the surrounding states probably heard it. Mom's wail rattled the walls, and made every hair on my body stand on end. *I may have over done it, with the snake!* The verbal explosion was a full ten plus, on the

Richter scale. Fault-lines shifted all over the earth, causing the planet to tilt on its axis. Even so, pride swelled in my six year old chest. *I really got her good!* Nevertheless, I was also slightly worried.

In those days, despite my best efforts, I was forced to attend Sunday church services. In our church, when it came to singing, Mom was well known for her ability to vocally out-shine every member of the congregation, including those of the choir. She was a golden soprano, with not only perfect pitch and a near perfect two octave range, but her volume was second to none. Mom could have brought down the walls of Jericho, all by herself. Although short and slim, she had a large mouth and great lungs, which made for a serious amount of volume, exceeding my pain threshold.

Later when I was ten, I'd play the large four keyboard *Conn* organ for the base church, sitting high in a loft designed to accommodate the organ and its massive set of pipes. With each hymn, Mom's beautiful voice was plainly the loudest and most passionate in the flock. When she spoke, her voice was gentle and sweet, but when she sang, Mom was transformed into a one hundred pound white Aretha Franklin. It made me wonder how such a giant sound

could come from such a person. But with the snake down the back of her dress, Mom's voice took on a volume I'd never imagined possible, even by Aretha. Three-seconds after that snake went down her dress, the shriek that exploded past her lips, both in the number of decibels and the sheer fierceness of the terror it held, surpassed every song she'd ever sung. Mom's scream was so loud and eerie, she seemed supernatural. It was like a demon had invaded Mom. The voice was like a cross between an eighteen-wheeler's air horn and a screaming banshee. That bizarre spine-chilling yowl had caused three neighbor ladies to leave their homes and come charging toward our house. Looking out the kitchen window, I spied the women trotting across our back field to see what had caused Mom's caterwauling, but each lived at least two hundred yards away. Mom kept-up her strange earsplitting scream, while running a repetitive oval circuit, tracking from the kitchen into the living room, then into the dining room; then, back into the kitchen, through another door, then into the living room, then the dining room, etc. Mom ran this circuitous route at least five times; all the while, she continued her terrifying yowl. At first, Mom's reaction stunned me, but then I focused on the fact that the little green grass snake

was harmless, and it was at that very moment, that I began to laugh, and soon found that I couldn't stop. I had at last discovered sadist humor, and it felt really great, just like Mom had laughed at the burning hot pepper. And so it was, at that very moment, that I understood Mom's cruel variety of humor… what she had felt when she had watched my misery. Finally understanding the humor of another person's suffering, I then began to laugh harder and harder! It was a 'eureka' moment! *Revenge is great stuff!* Suddenly I saw why God wanted to burn people, forever!

"Vengeance is mine…"

Romans 12:19

At least for a while, Mom was trapped, unable to rid herself of the snake. The vertical zipper to her dress was in the middle of her back, and while she was more than flexible enough to reach her back, and grab the zipper, every time she reached for it, I'd loudly yell at her.

"Watch out, Mom! The snake's head is poking

out, right up by the zipper! It'll bite you, if you grab the zipper! I don't know what kind of snake it is (a lie). I hope it's not poisonous, Mom!"

That comment would markedly increase Mom's fear, and so, she'd frightfully pull her hands away from the zipper, and scream ever louder, then just keep running in the aforementioned three room circuit, kitchen, living room, dining room, kitchen, etc., all the while continuing with her loud clamorous wailing. Then, I recalled that while rinsing my burning mouth, Mom had said, "Don't worry Joey; it's only temporary." So, I then spoke-up.

"Don't worry Mom, Dad will be home in a few hours to help you with the snake. It's only temporary. That snake is huge Mom! I was terrified just picking it up."

This comment gave me further inspiration. And so, I opted for maximum sadistic effect, to crank-up the fear to an even higher level.

"You know, there are rattlesnakes and cottonmouth moccasins in this region. I didn't get a real good look at it before I grabbed it. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, etc." I happily stated, barely being able to stop my laughter.

With that comment, Mom appeared completely pale, panicked, and absolutely pathetic, so I almost felt sorry for her, but I didn't. Even so, since I'd just discovered this new sense of humor, I couldn't feel pity. Like my Mom, I was stuck in a non-stop laughing mode, but Mom was no longer laughing. *This is too good to be true! I'll never stop laughing.*

My Mom has always been a bit of a control freak and great at solving problems. Correspondingly, her Dad, my aforementioned brilliant Grandpa, had nicknamed her, "*The Little General*." But for a while, it looked like *The Little General* had no solution to her dilemma, with the scary green grass snake; and for the first time in my life, I felt like I was in full control of my dear Mom. *She deserves it! I'm the boss, now!*

Mom could have pulled and stretched the tight waist of the dress to try to make the snake fall down and onto the ground, but it would have put the snake right in the crack of her butt. Regardless, Mom didn't seem to be able to think clearly. The payback felt magnificent. At that moment, I realized that Mom could easily be controlled by her fear of harmless little animals. For the rest of her life, she and I knew that I would always have this power over her, that I could touch those living things, which laid waste to

her soul: frogs, lizards, bugs, snakes, etc.

After again looking out through the glass panes and seeing the three neighbor ladies running toward our house, I wrongly figured that Mom was just about to be rescued. Considering the euphoria I was experiencing, I wasn't about to help her, certainly not after she'd fed me the scorching hot chili pepper. In effect, Mom had taught me that revenge wasn't just sweet, it was like the entire candy factory. I laughed to the point, that I was nearly passing-out from not being able to take a decent breath. I laughed till my jaw hurt, until tears streamed down my face, and so my nose plugged-up. That laugh is probably the best laugh I've ever had! No doubt at that moment, Mom hated me, as I had hated her!

The three ladies had come from different directions and had vectored into a group, breast bounding and aprons flapping, they were jogging across our backyard, fast approaching the backdoor. All three looked solemn, and were only seconds from coming in. Of course, Mom hadn't noticed the ladies, being involved with the shear horror of the green snake. I imagined that the grass snake was just wiggling all over the central furrow in the small of Mom's back. Grass snakes were indeed wigglers.

Then, I heard the pinging sounds as the screen door's long spring being stretched. The ladies were coming in, without knocking. The three women saw Mom acting crazy, and this made the situation even more comical, so I was forced to give-up on trying to stop laughing.

I've got to hand it to Mom. At the moment the ladies came in the house, *The Little General* came up with a viable solution to the grass snake predicament. On what would be her final circuit, she sprinted from the kitchen into the living room, then launched herself in the air, sailing over the back of the overstuffed green couch, and with a small jolt, while still screaming, Mom came down head-first onto one of the thick couch cushions. She'd always been flexible, but this was the first semi-athletic move, I'd ever seen her execute. It was similar to the Fosbury Flop, which the olympic high jumpers employ. She accomplished this creative maneuver out of sheer desperation.

Since she was momentarily upside-down, her dress had come-up around her head, thus her bare legs and white cotton panties were up in the air, fully exposed for the newly arrived three neighbor ladies to see. The women were standing in the dining room,

just looking-on with their mouths wide open, in apparent shock. Mom, still upside down with her dress over her face, hadn't seen them; she was far too frightened and distracted by the grass snake. As of yet, the three women hadn't yet seen the snake, and so Mom just seemed insane to them.

As a result of Mom's maneuver, she had successfully managed to make the little snake come-up and out of her dress, without having to touch her zipper; but then, the active creature had managed to get tangled in her long wavy brown hair, right on the back of her head. Coincidentally, the same terrifying condition, which she had once feared the little brown sparrow might have done.

This new unexpected realization of the snake being tangled in her hair caused Mom to quickly sit bolt upright, then she changed her vocalizations; instead wailing and screaming, she began to loudly call to Jesus. *I wonder if Jesus is watching all this? If he is, I'll bet he's laughing!* At this point, I actually feared I wouldn't be able stop laughing. *This is too good to be true!* Now please understand that Mom's use of the word, Jesus, was not in the form of cursing, but an actual desperate entreatment to the Lord, for personal assistance, a genuine appeal for divine

intervention, to rid her of the evil serpent, snarled in her hair.

"Lord, please help me! Jesus, please help me! Oh, Jesus save me! Oh, Jesus, please, pleasssseee! AAAAAAAAHHHH!" Mom screamed this at the top of her lungs, while the three neighbor women just stood still and watched, not sure of what they were witnessing.

From church, I had heard enough of the *Old Testament*, to know that if there was a deity watching this fiasco, He was most likely on my side. After all, God knew that Mom had given me the blazing hot pepper. Furthermore, the Lord had clearly provided me with the beautiful little green serpent. Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, and this was the Lord's vengeance at its finest. *Mom's begging Jesus, but God gave me the snake, and it's still in her hair.* Throughout the traumatic event, the three neighbor lady's just continued to stand there, eyes wide, looking petrified and perplexed. Only one lady spoke,

"Oh my, Oh my, Oh my, my, my…"

With the green snake now firmly twisted in Mom's hair, she began to intensely shake her head, left and right, in a determined effort to dislodge the

creature, but it was well snarled in her thick, coffee-colored Sicilian/Jewish tresses. It was like a nightmare that Mom couldn't awaken from. The innocuous serpent had gone from her lower back, up to her head! The look on Mom's face was one of pure living terror. Still, I felt no remorse, but only continued to laugh. The laughter built-up to a point that I was actually wondering, if I was about to pass-out. My maniacal laughter was like a runaway locomotive. The three neighbor ladies clearly thought I'd lost my mind.

Mom's violently swiveling her head back and forth, caused the head of the snake to come around and slap her, dead on her nose. When Mom realized that the snake had hit her in the face, it firmly registered in her brain, as yet, an even greater danger. With the new enhanced form of terror, she abandoned asking for Jesus's help, and began making a series of hoots and barking noises, which I suppose may have been a verbal indication of psychological exhaustion. Mom appeared to have gone completely insane. *Geez, Mom's sure got a lot of crazy energy!*

After the snake bumped her nose, Mom stopped rotating her head, and went back to making weird sounds. She just couldn't bring herself to use her

hands to remove the snake, being far too frightened to touch it. The three neighbor ladies were still standing in the dining room. Their mouths had closed a bit and looked to be in little 'O' shapes, staring at Mom and me. Then one finally one spoke-up.

"My God, is that a real snake in her hair?"

"It sure is. I put it down that back of her dress, ha, ha, ha, because she gave me a red pepper to chew-on, and it burned my mouth, ha, ha, ha…" My six year old brain proudly proclaimed, while laughing and nodding my enthusiastic affirmation.

Most likely the three neighbor women knew that both Mom and I had lost our minds. They looked at me, and frowned, as if I was insane, and of course, I only continued to laugh. None of the three women wished to step forward to assist Mom, with the grass snake, wiggling around in her hair. *They're all afraid of the snake!* The bright light green snake contrasted nicely with Mom's dark brown hair. The three perplexed ladies kept looking at Mom, then they looked at and each other, expecting the others to do something. Mom never could bring herself to use her hands to knock the snake from her hair, but when Mom sprang-up from the couch, the bright green

snake, at last, simply fell to the carpet, then swiftly slithered, behind the living room drapes.

Once free of the serpent, Mom spun-around, and locked me in a hard predatory gaze. Her face changed from a translucent pale, to a deep crimson, with features that looked unmistakably angry and obviously dangerous. *Mom's gonna kill me!* I'd never seen Mom pull back her lips and bare her teeth before, and was stunned to see how severely bloodshot her eyes had become. I felt like a mouse being targeted by a hungry falcon, talons extended, and she was just about to finish her high speed dive.

Mom was light years beyond apoplectic. I could tell that it was not going to matter that I was only six years old. Mom's face had 'no mercy,' written all over it. As far as she was concerned, I was due for a painful beat-down, and she didn't care that the neighbor ladies were watching, since back then, beating your kids in public was an accepted practice. Now days, parents are afraid to whip their kids, and so it's no wonder the crime rate keeps climbing.

Although I had never before run from my mother, I instinctively spun and made a break for the front door. Thank God, the heavy wooden front door was open. With my arms extended in front of me and

my palms facing forward, I violently shoved-open the screen door, and dashed through it, and onto the wide wooden porch. Mom also moved swiftly and almost managed to grab me. Her finger tips barely touched my shoulder, but as I began my sprint for freedom, I simply dropped that shoulder down, slipping her grip, as I shot out the door, to fly across the front porch, leaping out into the front yard. I hit the grass running, for all I was worth.

Having missed her grab, Mom slightly stubbled, which caused her to bounce off the door frame. She let out a sound, “Ooah!” as she momentarily staggered upright. Her minor impact with the doorframe lengthened my lead to about ten feet, and may have actually saved my life, for at that particular moment Mom seemed extraordinarily dangerous, and far from being her usual self. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw Mom had resumed the chase, and was fast gaining on me. Thank God, she’s never been much of a runner.

“Come here to me! You’re in big trouble, boy! Just wait till I get my hands on you! You’re gonna really get it this time, and it’s gonna be bad, real bad for you, Joey… real bad! Stop your running! Don’t you run from me, boy! Stop! *Hell no, I’m not stopping!*

You hear me, Joey? You stop right, now!" She bellowed forth her rage; Mom's sanity had clearly up-anchored and sailed over the horizon. *No way, Mom!*

In that circumstance, I would have been a complete fool to have stopped running from Mom. Having traversed the front yard, and dashed across the road, I then bolted down a shallow drainage culvert, between the woods and the side of a neighbor's house. Mom was still coming, less than four feet off my heels. *Holy shit, she almost has me!* Since I'd never seen Mom look so hatefully insane before, my fear became palpable. I was no longer laughing. In another few seconds, I knew she'd probably have a hold on me, but then luckily Mom unexpectedly ran out of steam, probably because she was already somewhat exhausted, after her taxing snake-encounter in the house. I could hear Mom puffing like an old time locomotive, and then she just stopped running, and bent over with her hands resting on her knees, sucking-in air, and trying to catch her breath. So, I slowed my speed a bit, to conserve my air, and to better watch my footing. Mom wasn't following me, so I kept-on slowly jogging, until I arrived at the local creek, about a mile through the woods. Once there, I sat down on

the end of the old tilted fishing dock, filled with a wondrous joy, for having extracted a heaping load of revenge, and for having escaped the seething wrath of *The Little General*. Moreover, I got my wish to go swimming in the creek and escape the day's unbearable heat, albeit it was without the required parental permission. Taking-off my shirt, shoes, and socks, I left them on the end of the dock, and dove in the cool water, while keeping an eye out for Mom, and for the deadly swimming cottonmouths. The swim felt refreshing, and I felt free and masterful.

Later, laying on my back, while slowly swimming around the surface, I laughed more than a little, thinking about my Mom's dramatic response to the harmless grass snake, and the three neighbor ladies watching her being upside down on the couch with her white cotton undies exposed. I'd come to appreciate Mom's sadistic brand of humor! *Revenge is the name of the game*. Prevailing over *The Little General* was an immensely satisfying experience. I tried to imagine Mom walking back in the house, then having to explain things to the neighbor ladies, who had been standing in the dining-room, witnessing her meltdown.

Later, I'd find out that Mom had waited at one of

the neighbor's homes, until Dad came home to remove the snake. But fortunately, Dad never located the harmless little green reptile. The fact that the snake was still somewhere inside the house, continued to work on Mom's psyche, for months, thereafter. All I had to do was move my head suddenly, as if I'd seen or heard something in the house, and Mom would almost wet her pants, for fear the snake had suddenly returned.

Climbing back-up the fishing dock's ladder, I laid down on the old graying wooden boards, basking in the warm afternoon sun. As soon as the front of my shorts had dried, I rolled onto my belly, and I briefly fell asleep. I spent the entire afternoon, swimming, walking the woods around the creek, and resting on the dock. As time passed, and the sun set, the realization that I could not safely go home, began to weigh heavily on me. Apparently, I'd won the battle only to lose the war. *Maybe I can just run away from home and never return*. It occurred to me to sneak on board a train, but the Washington DC train station was a long way from Pax River, Maryland; besides, I didn't have any money.

Putting the snake down Mom's dress and watching her comical reaction had been a seminal

moment, for I had begun to understand that *The Little General* was indeed vulnerable, and more than a weird… no longer omnipotent! Yet even though I had prevailed against Mom's dark tyranny, I knew that I would have to face dire consequences, meaning a painful butt whipping from Dad, when I went home.

After the sun set, and the stars had started to appear in the darkening blue sky, I again thought about running away from home, but I had nothing but my almost dry clothes, and so I thought about roaming around the neighboring houses and stealing kid's clothes off their clotheslines. I considered sleeping on the dock that night, but without my nightly two shots of whiskey, I'd probably not sleep, ergo except for a minute or two of sleep, the night would have seemed to lasted forever. Also, I was worried that a black water moccasin might find its way up onto the dock in the dark, and I'd die just like the poor dog had.

Furthermore, if I didn't get home soon, Dad would call the police. At age six, I didn't even have any *Cub Scout* experience, and plainly, I was too much of a coward to launch-out on my own. By then, Dad was almost certainly at home, and Mom was

sure to have convincingly sold me down the river about putting the snake down her dress. Dad dispensed whippings with his shiny black leather belt, but he only whipped me, when I truly deserved it, and I was certain he would feel that I had more than meant the criteria.

Considering Mom's ability to propagandize, another trait she got from her attorney father, Dad was no doubt convinced that the snake fiasco was deserving of a Spartan's punishment. Just interrupting or talking back to Mom was all that it took for Dad to render severe punishment, on my bare backside. Dad demanded that I fully respect Mom's every word, so after something as serious as the snake, I was certain I was going to have my butt torn-out of the preverbal frame.

There appeared to be no solution for my predicament. All I could do was to walk home and face the music. God, how I feared and dreaded the impending whipping, since it no doubt was going to be the mother of all whippings. There'd be no sitting down for days. On the way home, my mind continued searching for a solution, but I knew I was doomed; still, I had temporarily prevailed against *The Little General,* and even a bad butt whipping couldn't

take that trophy from me. Thank God, the path was wide and well worn, because the woods were so dark I could barely see where I was going.

Coming through the front door, there sat my Dad in his overstuffed chair with his punitive black leather belt looped over double, and laying on his lap. When he saw me, he got-up and turned off the TV. He was clearly waiting for me. Mom was nowhere in sight. Most likely, she was in their bedroom, intent on savoring every cry the belt extracted from my lips. Most likely, *The Little General* was silently standing on the other side of her bedroom door, smiling and listening.

Standing in front of Dad, I could see the anger plainly radiating from his light blue eyes, and every muscle in his vexed red face appeared to be in a tight spasm. Nostrils flared wide, he was beyond irritated, and so I knew I was about to experience considerable pain. *Holy shit! This going to hurt!* It was obvious that Mom's telling about snake had really done a number on him. *Mom got to him, alright!*

"Hi, Dad." I quietly spoke, with my head lowered.

"Where have you been, all this time?"

“The creek.”

“This late?”

“Yeah, I was afraid to come home.”

“I understand that, since you know that you’re getting a whipping, don’t you?” Dad rhetorically asked.

“Yes, sir.” I responded, still looking at the floor. *I’m dead meat.*

“Before I whip you, there’s one thing I have to know.”

“What’s that Dad?” I asked.

“I’ve got to know what is wrong with you, son! Besides that stupid stuff you did with the bullets and the bomb at your Grandparent’s house, you’ve never done anything like this before… nothing this bad… not to your mom. {This was the only time the homemade bomb ever was mentioned.} Whatever possessed you to put a snake down the back of your mother’s dress? Have you lost your ever-loving mind?” Dad asked, while lifting his eyebrows and making a series of wrinkles across his high and ultra white forehead.

When he asked me that question, I suddenly

realized that Mom had only told Dad her side of the story, evidently making no mention of the red hot pepper. As a result, I knew that I had a bargaining chip, possibly even a *Get-Out-of-Jail-Free* card, if only I could present my side of the argument well enough; after all, Dad was always fair. So, I took a deep breath, steadied myself, then only slightly dramatized the story of the sizzling hot red pepper, beginning with how Mom had lead me to believe she was baking oatmeal cookies, and that she had told me to chew fast as I could. Next, I carefully described how badly the red pepper had burned my mouth and lips. Continuing with my story, I described how I had repeatedly rinsed my mouth in the sink, and then how long and uncontrollably Mom had laughed at me. Then, knowing that Dad liked snakes, I carefully made my summation.

"And after all Dad, it was only a grass snake, and we both know they're harmless, but that red hot pepper sure wasn't harmless. I guess I'm ready for my butt whipping, now. Go ahead, if you got to, Dad." I said starting to unbuckle my pants, but did so slowly, hoping for the stay of execution.

While I desperately wanted Dad to reconsider, I genuinely doubted that he would. He already had the

belt out, and still seemed ready to proceed. Then, I noticed that Dad was having trouble controlling his face. He kept looking down, and finally threw his head back and broke-out laughing. Dad laughed long and hard. It then dawned on me, that all three in our family, Mom, Dad, and I, had laughed richly that strange day. After he stopped laughing, he spoke.

"Don't ever do anything like that to your mother, again. You hear me? Just go brush your teeth, and get in your bed. You've got school in the morning, and you need to get some sleep." And just like that, Dad had commuted my sentence.

"Yes sir." I said turning to go brush my teeth.

Astonishingly, I had strategically dodged a major butt whipping! *Hallelujah!* Once in my bedroom, just down the hall from Mom and Dad's room, I could hear Mom strenuously yelling at Dad, about my not being punished for my terrible transgression, concerning the snake. Silently, I steeped out into the hallway, and barefooted tip-toed down the hall to be able to better hear.

"My God, Honey! I can't believe that you're just going to let that bad boy get away with putting that snake down my dress… a snake… my God! How can

you allow that? Honestly… Now, he'll think he can do it again, and I can't handle another one of those episodes! I thought I was going to die, Honey! It was terrible! If he does that again, I'll have to punish him, and I might not stop. *She's not kidding!* If I had gotten ahold of him, I don't know what I'd have done. You just don't care what happens to me, Honey! Do you? I thought you loved me! Are you really going to let him get away with that kind of thing? It was a snake… a real snake! That's just not right, Honey!" Mom was screaming inside their bedroom. *She's really mad!*

Arguments escalate, when someone stops thinking.

The Road to WWIII by Dr. A.Y.W. Orem

Mom's real fear was that I'd find another snake, or some other little creature (spiders, roaches, lizards, toads, etc.), and threaten her with it. I'd held my breath, so I could hear her better. Clearly, Mom was afraid of me, since she knew I had no fear of things like snakes, mice, bugs, etc., ergo she was worried about what I might do next. Perhaps, she

thought I might let a couple of them loose in the house, and so she wanted me to be severely punished. Paranoia ruled her gentle but crafty mind. Dad remained calm and reasonable. Throughout their sixty-four years of marriage, Dad never raised his voice to Mom, not once! To say the least, he was a man of patience and remarkable restraint.

"You didn't tell me about you giving him the red hot pepper, sweetie. You tricked him, and you hurt his mouth, and to make matters worse, you apparently laughed at his real suffering. And, it sounds like you really over did the laughing thing. And, I don't think Joey's exaggerating one bit. Let's face it, you lied to him about the pepper, and you hurt his mouth and his feelings. That wasn't exactly fair. Was it? You got to admit the boy's creative, and who says there's no justice in the world? But don't worry; I'm pretty sure he won't do it again. You don't plan on giving him anymore hot peppers do you? He's not going to do anything to you. Just try to be civil with him, and cool your jets." Dad was laughing as he said this.

"So, you're actually going to let Joey get away with it? Is that right? I can't believe this! A snake is pure evil, and you know it, and you're not going to

punish him? I can't believe this!" Mom exclaimed. *She's really scared of me! She's afraid to whip me herself, because I might let some creature loose in the house, and I could always claim that I don't know how the animal got into the house.*

"I'm afraid I'm not do anything to him; at least, not this time, and that's that. But, be sure and let me know, if he does this again. How'd you react to having the snake down your dress?" Dad responded, being unable to stop himself from laughing.

"Very funny! It's gonna be your fault, if he grows-up to be a criminal. He's going to be a criminal! You hear me?" Mom angrily countered. *Maybe I will be a criminal.*

With that comment, I quietly walked back to my room, to wait for Mom and Dad to go to sleep. That night, I laid in my bed thrilled at having bested *The Little General,* with the harmless grass snake, and I'd spent much of the day swimming, and some of the evening at the creek. But the best thing was that I'd avoided a major butt whipping. Once I was sure that they were asleep, I tip-toed downstairs to the liquor cabinet, and sitting in Dad's overstuffed chair, I slowly downed three fingers, just one finger past my usual limit. I thought long and hard about all that

had happened that day, taking great care not to laugh. It was that day, that I'd learned to laugh at another person's misery, and it felt good!.

Make no mistake, I dearly love my Mom, and firmly believe that she is an outstanding mother, but since that day with the red pepper and the grass snake, which was about fifty-nine years ago, my Mom and I still have a bit of an unspoken competition. Of course, I never again threatened her with another animal, but from then on, she knew that I was a somewhat unpredictable child, and that I forever had that simple power, over her. All I had to do was to bring-up the topic of an animal, but infrequently enough not to make it appear intentional.

"I cut through the woods, coming back from Jeff's house, and spied a hognose snake, this afternoon, Dad. It was a real fat one, too. You sure don't see too many of those."

"…George keeps an aquarium full of mice in his bedroom, as pets."

"Saw this beetle down by the creek, today. It was a this big (I hold up my thumb and index finger spread apart), and with these huge pinchers…"

Mom and I have always loved to argue. It's hard to explain, but both Mom and I actually look forward to verbal contention. The actual topic of debate is relatively unimportant. The idea is to pick a topic, and take a competitive position, arguing and bantering, and not without emotion. It's not a hate filled argument, but more of a sort of one-upmanship, not unlike an aggressive tennis match. We've never shouted, or said unkind things; nevertheless, it can be intense at times. Dad never really understood this competition between Mom and I, and never cared for it. From my perspective, the debates are actually Mom, still trying to save face for that day, that I put the snake down her dress. In spite of that, Mom and I do enjoy arguing… most of the time. As her mind has slowed with age, I had to slow down the competition, without letting her know that I was doing so. In her mind, she still thinks she's got the edge. Thank God!

Pity… healing balm or paralyzing poison?

Where the Dark Weeds Grow by A.William Yerom

Psychologically, Mom never entirely recuperated from her encounter with the harmless green serpent. It was the day that she knew I'd witnessed the overwhelming magnitude of her unreasonable fear. In essence, she was ashamed. Any time I need a good laugh, I just remember the grass snake in Mom's hair and the shocked look of the three neighbor ladies, standing in the dining room. As long as we lived in that house, the grass snake was never found, so every so often, I would say things like, "Thought I heard something in the hall closet. Do we have mice?." Or, "I think I saw the drapes move in the living room, a little while ago. But, when I looked, I didn't see anything." Looking back, I now feel slightly guilty about that day, still I'm glad it happened.

My Mom does have her clever ways. Her ability to argue is nearly as good as her lawyer father. After the snake, she always relied on passive aggression, with plausible deniability, just in case Dad happened to get involved. Dad always had the final say in all family disputes. For example, after that day, Mom very rarely baked oatmeal cookies, and when she did they were over cooked. Moreover, she'd more frequently serve canned spinach, and under-cooked bitter hard Brussel sprouts, both of which she knew I

hated, but which she'd claim were good for me, telling Dad that she was looking out for my health. Dad knew she was lying, but he never intervened. It was her right to serve whatever food she chose.

Unfortunately, Mom now lives in a luxurious retirement home. She's in her late eighties, and at one time, she suffered greatly with Alzheimers disease. Yes, I used the past tense, 'suffered,' but she no longer has the illness. When her mind first began to slip, round six years ago, Dad and I hoped it was just the normal aging process. But after about a year, the pernicious disease had plainly accelerated. Emotionally, her realizing that she had the disease laid waste to her soul, terrifying her. Her fear of the grass snake was nothing compared to her fear of Alzheimers. She'd seen what the disease had done to her father, and it had broken her heart, for she so very dearly loved him, and he had been a very good man.

As the disease became more pronounced in Mom, she all at once came to the conclusion that she had it. Everyone else had long suspected she had the illness. I don't know what it was that made her suddenly reach the sudden terrifying realization, but with that sudden devastating awareness, she went into a mind-

bending panic. Probably only her christian religion prevented her from committing suicide. She was facing the prospect of being a living idiot, all the way to the bitter end! Like I said earlier, the snake was only her second worst fear. She was unequivocally petrified. She was more terrified of Alzheimers, than she ever was of the grass snake. Mom was more afraid of that dreaded sickness, than of death itself, and I mean that literally! I was in my fifties and possessed a goodly measure of empathy, when it happened, and so it hurt me to see my Mother so utterly devastated.

The fear caused her to endure eight violent exhausting panic attacks, in just under one week; each such fear-laden attack lasted several hours and presented, not only with extreme sickening terror, but with life-threatening acute tachycardia. For two to three hours each time, her heart pounded-out roughly 220 beats per minute! Maximum heart rate for a healthy teenager is around 206 to 212, and so, it was truly a miracle that my dear elderly mother, didn't die. Even before the onset of the Alzheimers, she had severe cardiac arrhythmia. In the ongoing nightmare, called Alzheimers, you live in a world of strangers, many of which somehow know your name,

which spooks you. Those people, who you do recall, are often all dead and buried. The aches and pains of old age remain as unpleasant surprises. You can't enjoy a book or movie, because you can't remember what happen thirty seconds ago, yet for some reason, you continue to realize that your confusing plight is permanent, all the way to the grave. Only the disorganized realm of dreams can bring peace, due to the release of beta-endorphin from the pituitary, as stimulated by the locus coeruleus, where dreams are initiated in the brain.

She was in her eighties at the time. Far too old, to start fighting battles with ice cold fear. Dealing with that level of fear is more a young person's appointment, child birth, combat, etc. Dealing with fear in your eighties, takes real courage and strength. Because of her tremendous fear of profound senility, the corresponding panic attacks came night after night. In the nightly visits to the emergency room, I sat next to her bed, while the physicians struggled to treat Mom's tachycardia, induced by her realization that she had Alzheimers. Generally, the attending hospital doctor would just begrudgingly give her a goodly dose of valium or xanax to smooth out her fear, but sometimes the first dose didn't work, and

invariably they'd want to wait awhile, before administering enough drug to do the job. In my mind, it was an unnecessary torture. So what if they'd accidentally overdosed her? For some reason, the doctors always waited for hours, before finally acquiescing to give her the addictive medicine, and in my humble opinion, they simply prolonged her agony, and clearly risked damaging her heart with that delay. As mentioned, being allowed to undergo such long periods of tachycardia at her age should have killed her. When the patient is in their eighties and running 220 beats per minute, why wait to give the medicine? What's better… being addicted to medicine but alive, or having a heart attack or a stroke and being crippled or dead? Certainly too many doctors have made their patients addicts, but by the same token, sometimes they have harmed people by not administering an addictive drug. When dying time comes, if you're suffering great pain, due to cancer, etc., don't engage a physician, who's concerned about addiction.

When Mom was hospitalized for her panic attacks and tachycardia, twice after the second dose of valium, the fear still managed to assert itself, so more drugs would have to be prescribed, and so the

medicine simply knocked her unconscious. After a few hours of sleep, Mom would become conscious again, and then she'd once again begin to realize that she had Alzheimers, whence another panic attack would soon ensue. It was like she was locked in a cage with a vicious wild animal, that never stopped attacking her, and there was no door to the cage. Which is worse, hell or Alzheimers, burning skin or nonstop intense fear? The real difference between those two situations is that one is fictional and the other is real. After a week and her eighth panic attack had ended, Mom was pathetically traumatized. She was beyond exhaustion. The stress of knowing she had Alzheimers had very nearly killed her, and the fatigue had rendered her seriously confused. There appeared to be no hope for Mom to escape her miserable fate.

So after that eighth panic attack, I put my mind to the task of trying to save her from her own fear. Since there was no apparent logical means to help Mom with her dilemma, I stepped outside the box, and relied on the illogical. As you must know by now, through the years, I've become something of a master liar. Consequently, I contrived a merciful lie to save my good Mom from her fear-soaked self.

Always go with what you know. When it comes to effective dishonesty, the most difficult part is faking sincerity, but once you've conquered that, lying becomes a snap, as long as you keep your facts straight.

Whenever I hear someone say that it's 'never' right to lie, I think about the merciful lie, I manufactured for my dear mother, and I then know that a lie can be a good, if not a superb, gift. Before springing the lie on Mom, I briefed the hospital staff, making sure that every doctor, nurse, and attendant on Mom's floor was in on and supported the deceit, and to my surprise and delight, they all agreed. In effect, the well crafted, rather simple, deception more or less removed the disease from Mom's awareness. It was remarkably easy, yet somewhat multifaceted. If you look close enough everything is complex, even the smallest subatomic particle, especially since there can't be a 'smallest particle,' for if something were only made of itself, it couldn't exist. Sounds like the reverse credo for a devout psychopath. If matter just keeps being made of ever smaller particles, can there be any matter as most of us like to think of matter?

Mom knew she had Alzheimers, but she also

knew that she'd had quite a number of medical tests recently run, and had been suffering with severe fatiguing attacks of tachycardia. She also knew she was being regularly given various meds. However, since she knows very little about medicine, she was not at all sure what all the lab tests were for, nor did she know much about the meds, she was receiving. My Mom's meager knowledge of medicine was not too much better than that of my aforementioned Grandma, who acted as though she was a world renown microbiologist, especially when it came to black people, and their apparent plethora of germs. Both women would occasionally throw-out a couple of medical facts, as if they thought they were a combination of Galen of Pergamon, Harvey Cushing, and William Halstead. Taking advantage of this fact, and my near limitless talent for prevarication, I delivered the lie, telling Mom that all the tests, she had taken, weren't able to determine why her heart had suddenly speeded-up (the tachycardia), but at least those tests, in particular the PET scan of her brain, had definitely shown that she did 'not' have Alzheimers!

"What? Are you sure, Joey? I don't have Alzheimers?" Mom pleadingly asked.

“Absolutely, Mom… you don’t have Alzheimers… not even a trace of the disease.” I said this matter-of-factly, as if it were of no real consequence, as if the idea of her having the dreaded disease had never crossed my mind.

Matter-of-factly, I played this deceitful revelation, with just the right amount of nonchalance, and she blessedly bought it, hook, line, and sinker. At least she did for a few seconds. The sudden relief on my Mom’s aged face was a magnificent sight to behold, probably akin to the serene look that a mother has, when she first lays eyes on her new born baby. All Mom’s muscles of facial expression instantly relaxed, and her lovely smile took control of my heart. She was ecstatically relieved. Her fear and tension just melted away. She suddenly looked twenty years younger. Her marked transformation was a sight to behold. The simple lie was a soothing balm, and in truth, a bit of a blessed miracle.

“Then, what’s wrong with my mind? Why can’t I remember things, better?” Mom skeptically asked.

Mom was not yet totally fooled. But, I was fully prepared with yet another strategic follow-up fiction. A good liar is always prepared with their next lie,

and the next, and yet another, *ad infinitum*, and I had rehearsed this scenario, anticipating of that very question. After all, her sanity and peace of mind, if not her life, depended on it. Besides, the only real deceit is regret-generating self-deceit.

"The doctor's already told you, Mom. But you keep forgetting. It's the medicines that you have to take in order to control your arrhythmia, your irregular heart, and that dangerous tachycardia. It's your cardiac meds that make you forget. They cloud your memory a little, but that's a small price to pay, since without those meds, you'd probably die of heart failure. Thank God for pharmacology, Mom. And, thank God you don't have Alzheimers. It's just too bad that the drugs make you a little forgetful. But, that's really no big deal. Don't sweat it, Mom. Besides, you'll never have to worry about Alzheimers, at least according to the PET scan they ran on your brain. Your brain is completely fine, it's your heart that's the problem, but it can be controlled with those meds, so everything is just fine."

A deceit which remedies fear, is more precious than a host of pedestrian truths.

You Called For A Moral Estimate? by A.W. Yeormi, Ph.D.

It was the fear of Alzheimers, which would have ended my dear Mother's life, not the disease. In a very serious way, the fear of the disease was worst than the actual mental deterioration, produced by the disease. For many, the traumatic fear of Alzheimers is so powerful, that it can produce cardiac arrest, stroke, ergo in some cases, death. Returning from the last hospital visit, Mom did not go back to her and Dad's apartment. The retirement home felt it was best for her to be admitted directly to the nursing home section of the retirement home, where she'd lived in a stark room, with an attached bathroom, but the much smaller accommodation offered around the clock nursing care, which she certainly would need, as the Alzheimers worsened.

Within the 24 hours of the last hospital visit, Mom had gone from living in a large plush comfortable apartment, to residing in a dreary room, within a slightly malodorous nursing home. Since Alzheimers and the exhaustion of the tachycardia had chipped away at her cognition, Mom was highly perplexed, but certainly aware enough to loath the

miserable little acrid room. Like the hospital staff, everyone working at the nursing home agreed to support my lie, about her confusion being due to the drugs for tachycardia and her cardiac arrhythmia, and that she had to stay in the little room, so that her cardiac condition could be properly monitored; that was yet another facet of my lie. It was a minor miracle in that I managed to get so many people, at the hospital, as well as at the nursing home, to go along with the helpful lie. Even the residents of the nursing home went along with the lie.

To Dad's credit, at the age of ninety, he gave-up his comfortable expensive apartment, and moved into the minuscule lackluster cinder block room with Mom, so she wouldn't be alone at night! She had begged him, not to leave her alone in the tiny sterile room, and I could see that her begging, broke Dad's heart. It was perhaps the only time I'd seen my Dad show compassion. He hardly ever displayed emotion and never cried, not once during his entire life, not one salty tear. Mom and In the smelly nursing home, Dad moved into and shared a ten by fifteen foot bedroom, with an attached petite bathroom. At first, the situation appeared to be an ignominious end for both of them. *God this is so depressing!* Mom's short

term memory, and her more recent, long term memories continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate, and there was Dad trapped in the little room with her, as she became more and more senile. After one year, she had gotten so bad, that she believed the nursing home hallway was the hallway on a cruise ship. I'd be holding Mom's arm, walking her around in the building for exercise, and she'd ask, "Where are we going, Joey?"

"We're just walking for exercise, Mom." I'd reply.

"No,… I mean where's this ship going? What's our next port of call?" She'd ask, thinking that we were in the passageway of a cruise ship.

"Jamaica, Mom… We're going to Montego Bay, Jamaica… I think. Wait till you see the beaches there! You're gonna love the beautiful waters, there." I responded.

"That's nice, Joey. I can't wait to see it." Mom said, while smiling.

"You'll love the place, Mom… clear turquoise water, white sand, and beautiful sunsets… good food, too."

"I sure wish I could get off this heart medicine, so my memory worked better." Mom complained.

God, she sure doesn't forget that lie, even with her Alzheimers!

"It's no big deal. Those meds are keeping you from having a heart attack, and as far as I can tell, you seem to be getting along just fine. Your memory doesn't seem too bad to me. You're the only one who notices it. In fact, lately it seems your memory has gotten better." I skillfully lied.

Watching your mother lose her mind has its own unique way of ripping your heart out. At times, it literally made me sick. The sickness isn't just depression, but sometimes I'd actually get slightly nauseated, when visiting her. For many, their parents remain their life's touchstone, so when the parents begin to lose their mind, so does the child.

Watching the onset of Alzheimers in Mom, was like a part of my mind was slowly being destroyed, the part of my mind, which allowed me to feel peace and security. Near as I could tell, her memory had deteriorated to the point that she had little recollection of the last fifteen years of her life. She had no idea how long she'd been in the nursing home, didn't know which state of America she resided in, then finally she didn't realize what a state was.

Still, Mom never forgot my helpful lie, that she had memory problems, were because of the drugs she was taking for her heart problems. It is honestly a weird feeling to know that the greatest gift, which I ever gave to my Mother was a lie; but then, I was born to lie, and it came from her side of the family! So… next to my child, and my fine parents, and a few friends, God's greatest gifts to me has been my ability to lie, as well as that aforementioned ionic trick of imaging I actually have freewill. *Thanks for the deception, God!* Maybe the lie of freewill is God's greatest and trickiest gift.

Next to life, could God's greatest gift actually be a lie… the allusion of free will? Could it be that God has deceived the human race, into believing they make their own choices, when in fact we don't? If so, perhaps God occasionally lies, as well. Let's face it, God has given a very shallow explanation about the nature of the universe, with no mention of black holes, no explanation of gravity, and practically nothing about the nature of life, hardly anything about heaven and hell, just oodles of stuff about believing, and behavioral wisdom. Nothing in the Bible discusses astrophysics, DNA, or biochemistry, and if there is a God, surely he is capable of

explaining such things, better than the Bible does. The Bible is pretty much restricted to cool stories, philosophical issues, wisdom, insights, morality, etc., without a micro-drop of insight into the life and the universe, yet God apparently lays claim to creating everything. At least, the ever Holy Bible says so, and so many people believe that it's only filled with truth, and not a single untruth or bad thing.

One day, while Mom was in the nursing home, I was online perusing the *National Library of Medicine*, and read about some research done at the *University of Aberdeen,* by a pair of Scottish scientists (Drs. Claude Wischiz and Lutz Schweiger). They'd been looking at the use of a drug, called *methylene blue* in the elderly. *Methylene blue* has been around, since the late 1800s; and so, the drug has long been *FDA* approved, and commonly used to treat bladder infections, and the drug appears to be essentially side-effect free. If you were to take 50 to 100 mg orally, you'd fine that it dramatically turns your urine a bright blue. I've tried it and my pee came out a deep mediterranean blue. It looks even more interesting, if you take a multivitamin, along with it, then the urine turns a positively bright neon greenish blue. It almost looks as if it could glow in the dark!

http://www.medpagetoday.com/MeetingCoverage/ICAD/10320

The two aforementioned Scottish doctors (above website) reported that *methylene blue* seemed to ameliorate the senility in many older folks, and they published those findings. Admittedly, bladder infections in the elderly can produce marked mental confusion, but the improvements which these two scientists observed by using *methylene blue*, did not appear to be owing to curing bladder infections, for many of the subjects had been Alzheimers patients, and without cystitis (bladder infection). I shared that research with my local doctor, and asked him to please consider writing a script for *methylene blue.* He interviewed my Mom, did his own investigation into the aforementioned research, then phoned me.

"No problem… It's a safe *FDA*-approved drug, the research about its use in Alzheimers looks good, and it's certainly seems to be worth a try. It doesn't appear that the drug could hurt her, since it has few if any side effects." He said (at least words to that effect).

My doctor is one of those rare people, who truly cares about his patients; one of those rare Christians, who seems to actually follow the teachings of Christ. As strange as it may sound, his primary reason for being a doctor is to heal the sick. He never talks the talk to me. In fact, he talks very little, but he walks the walk, and I admire that man more than anyone I've known, except of course for my dear Dad.

People, who are so morally good, are scarce, indeed. The coolest thing about such folks is they usually don't realize how amazing they actually are. Thanks and ever thanks, Doc. I sincerely hope you have many enjoyable years to go, and make it to heaven (since you're a Christian), without anymore suffering. You've already had more than your share. It's time for some joy in your life, before you finally meet your maker. All things considered, you're the toughest guy I know. There are very, who could have endured what you have, and still maintain their good nature.

Armed with the doctor's prescription, I went to the pharmacy to get it filled, but not a single pharmacy had *methylene blue* in stock. *Where's all the methylene blue gone?* All the pharmacists, told me that only recently had the drug been mysteriously

removed from their inventories, so I inquired if there had been any adverse side effects reported concerning the drug, causing it to be recalled. They all stated that they didn't know of any, that to the best of their knowledge the drug was remarkably safe, *FDA*-approved, and had been around since the late 1800s. The *FDA* didn't come into existence, until around 1930. The methylene blue was gone from the pharmacy shelves, without a reason given!

In fact, after I'd made various phone calls all over the country, and after countless internet searches, *methylene blue* appeared to have mysteriously disappeared from all the pharmacy shelves across the country. Next, I placed calls to foreign countries: England, France, Germany, Mexico, etc., but there too it appeared that the drug had vanished! *Why?* The pharmacists said that they couldn't even order it, as if it were a highly addictive of poisonous compound, instead of a safe non-addictive treatment for bladder infections. A few weeks prior, the drug was in all the pharmacies, and then suddenly, it had just vanished, without a reason given; not by the *FDA*, nor by any pharmaceutical companies. *Why have the pharmaceutical companies pulled it from the drugstore shelves?* Again, there had

not been any reported problems, nothing to explain its hasty withdrawal from the pharmacies.

The reason for its disappearance was simple. *Methylene blue* seemed to work as an effective treatment for Alzheimers; but unfortunately, for the drug companies, *methylene blue* was dirt cheap, cost practically nothing to make, and it had been being sold for many years at a very low cost, so there would be no justification for charging more, if it was used to treat Alzheimers. If it replaced all those expensive Alzheimers drugs, which don't work worth a hoot, and tend to have lots of horrible side effects, which require additional drug treatment, the pharmaceutical companies would stand to lose a butt-load of money. Hence, the drug companies had no choice but to pull *methylene blue* from the pharmacy shelves. And again, remember it had been *FDA* approved for many years, having been used since the late 1800s. Many people now realize that the *FDA* works in support of big Pharma, and not for the creation of cures.

So, the drug that had been around forever is now under-going testing at NIHH (*National Institute of Human Health*). If you don't believe me, go on the *US National Library of Medicine*, and check it out. Shame

on you greedy psychopathic drug companies! Shame on you, for not caring about the wellbeing of people, and for putting your greed, ahead of human suffering. If you, the reader, think I'm being too harsh on those drug companies, bare-in-mind that the Alzheimers drugs have terrible side effects, are very expensive, and they don't work, yet they are *FDA* approved! The people that take said drugs are simply desperate. But again, those drugs don't work. Quite likely, the drug companies will combine *methylene blue* with one of their crappy costly ineffective Alzheimers drugs, and market it as the new supposed 'miracle' combination drug. Not to mention, they'll obviously charge an extremely high price, extracting every penny they can, from the suffering elderly patients, and their families; doing their level best to minimize the financial legacy that the suffering elderly person might be able to leave to their offspring.

Moreover, if big Pharma combines *methylene blue* with another drug, which has adverse side effects, then that will require more drugs to treat the associated side effects, and bleed yet more money from the desperate senile patients, and/or their loving families. This hypothetical new combo drug

will almost certainly hit the market about the time this book gets published, if there's a publisher foolish enough to publish this. On-the-other-hand, the on-going *NIHH* testing may just suddenly uncover some nefarious (completely contrived) side-effect, which causes *methylene blue* to fall off the *FDA*'s approved drug registry. One way *methylene blue* could be made to appear dangerous is, if in the *NIHH* testing, they use extremely high doses, to purposely illicit negative side effects, or just maybe the results could be falsified! Don't doubt for a second that these things don't happen; after all, big Pharma's real motive is always profit. On the other hand, perhaps the drug companies will just try to slightly modify the chemical structure of the molecule, name it something else, and then claim it is a new miracle cure.

If the drug companies do go for the 'new' combination drug, or the modified molecule, profits will likely soar, but doubtlessly there will only be a very modest rise in the corresponding stock value, and the pharmaceutical company will probably do their best to steal the credit from aforementioned scientists at *Aberdeen University* in Scotland, where it appears that the benefits of *methylene blue* in the

treatment of Alzheimers were first discovered. Big Pharma will advertise this ‘accomplishment’ proves that they genuinely care. The CEO will get a brand new 20,000 square foot vacation mansion in Hawaii, the USS Constitution for his own private cruising frigate, and a 380 Airbus, staffed by *Girls Aloud*. Some other scientist, besides the guys at *Aberdeen University* will get the Nobel Prize for medicine. After all, the Nobel Prize is now heavily influenced by politics, rather than by actual accomplishment. Alfred Nobel once said something in which he attempted to demonstrate that the awards should only be made by merit. But his quote seems to have a couple of biases, built in the last six words. Also, with the use of the male pronoun, he indicated a bit of sexual bias. Judge for yourself.

“It is my express wish that in awarding the prizes no consideration be given to the nationally of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he be Scandinavian or not.”

Alfred Nobel

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/

alfred_nobel.html#SkvvQmAck7PCgPfI.99

If it's true that the drug companies pulled the *methylene blue* from the pharmacy shelves, because of gluttonous greed, while they knew that methylene blue significantly attenuated Alzheimers, then they actually might be guilty of some form of grievous criminal felony: physical battery, if not murder, considering that Alzheimers has directly or indirectly caused many of its' suffers to die prematurely. The Alzheimers patient often creates numerous accidents, from stepping in front of motor vehicles, to leaving the oven on and burning down the house, sometimes with people inside. Shouldn't it be a felony to withhold a beneficial drug, which has been safely used for over one hundred and forty years? If a person is stepped into the deep end of a pool and is drowning, and you don't toss them the lifesaver, aren't you guilty of murder?

Is it not a felony for an individual to purposely withhold medication, which could have saved someone's sanity, if not prevented their untimely death? What if you, an individual, were the beneficiary on a life insurance policy for some diabetic friend of yours, and you somehow kept their

insulin from them? Would that not be a felony? You bet it would be, and you'd go to prison for it. Never-the-less, big Pharma does this on a grand scale and nothing happens to them! Not only that, but a certain political party does everything it can to minimize the magnitude of lawsuits brought against major corporations, regardless of the damage they inflict.

If such criminal prosecutions were initiated, they should be directly aimed at piercing the corporate veil, to convict the corporate officers themselves, and put them in prison, not just nail them with some nebulous ineffectual fine, paid for by discretionary funds of the corporation. Perhaps, the prosecution should consider the death penalty, for first degree premeditated murder. Doesn't such inappropriate manipulations of human healthcare make it clear that drugs should not be a private business? The creation of new drugs should not be based on profit, but on the desire to heal, the wish to improve the quality of life, and the hunger to save lives. Too many lives hang in the balance.

But even if big Pharma's corporate officers were actually arrested, due to their wealth, they'd have the best attorneys. Pharmaceutical research, manufacture, and distribution is too important to be

managed by for-profit corporations, which only care about money, and therefore fear and block the creation of cures. Medicine should be socialized, since the driving factor behind medicine should be only health… not profit. This is simple reasoning, and blatantly obvious. If a disease could be prevented by a vaccine, or cured by the administration of a short course of medicine, big Pharma would cease to significantly profit.

To acquire the *methylene blue* for Mom, I hired a chemist to synthesize it. He charged me $70 for an entire kilo of high grade *methylene blue,* which equates to over 15,000 doses, at 65 mg per dose. That is Mom's dosage, for five days out of every seven. She doesn't take the drug on the weekends, to prevent drug build-up in the blood and tissues. The single kilo is more than she'll ever use. Certainly, that $70 would be far too little profit for big Pharma. The chemical lab had to mail the drug to a local apothecary, to be put in capsules, and so, I started giving Mom, one capsule (65 mg, oral), each day. As stated, every weekend I'd skip a dose to make sure no drug buildup occurred. The apothecary charged 50 cents a capsule to pill it up. Getting the drug encapsulated cost far more than the drug itself! As

mentioned, our fine family doctor wrote the script, but he wrote it for free! What's wrong with the idea of free medicine? If major US corporations paid their fair share of income tax, we could have free medical care, and free education, through graduate school, and still pay the overly massive military budget. Your day is coming big Pharma!

There's a David for every Goliath.

Let Them Eat Cake and Grow Rich by Solhe Soyu Kufac

Not too long ago, I was in London with my daughter. We were going to ride on The London Eye (a giant Ferris-wheel), by the river Thames, but the line of people, waiting to get on, was far too long, so we decided to go find something to eat. There was a hospital close by, rumored to have a great cafeteria. When I finished eating, my daughter was only half finished, so while she stayed in the cafeteria, I walked back into the bowels of the hospital, where I found what looked like a doctor's lounge. Two doctors and a nurse were seated there. I introduced myself and asked what it would cost me, if I an

American, had heart trouble and had to have bypass surgery there in their hospital. The two docs said that it would cost me nothing. Then the nurse said, that since I wasn't English, I'd have to pay a drug fee of eight pounds, less than fourteen dollars! Both doctors had been trained in open heart surgery at Harvard Med in the United States. They could have stayed and worked in the US for much higher salaries, but had elected to work at the English hospital for the lower government wage. In unstated terms, they let me know that their reward was whatever good they did, as doctors, not the money. And, whenever I saw or talked to patients, who went to the hospitals of modern countries with socialized medicine five things were apparent: The quality of medical care was superior to that in the US. The hospitals were extraordinarily clean. The patients didn't have to wait to be seen. Where necessary, attendants were sent home with the recovering patents to assist them. And, the patients were counseled on preventative medicine, things like, behavioral changes, sleeping more, diet, exercise, etc.

After Mom had been taking the methylene blue for three weeks, nothing had changed in her condition. During that time, my Mom's sister's

husband had died, my Uncle Jake. He'd had a stroke and was having trouble walking. After about a year after the stroke, Jake received a CAT scan, and his doctor told Uncle Jake that he'd reached maximum medical improvement, but still, Jake didn't have good use of his legs The doctor went on to say that the scan revealed that Jake was suffering with Alzheimers. Needless to say, this devastated Uncle Jake. So, Jake went home, put an aluminum lawn chair in the driveway, sat down, and shot himself. His wife, my Mom's sister, called the police. Jake was a profoundly good man, and an amazing father to his kids, my first cousins. I always liked him, because of his ever-ready sense of humor. His favorite hobby was scuba diving. The fact that such a great man died in a cheap folding aluminum chair seems so tragic to me, but I suppose when dying time comes, the location and various surrounding accouterments are inconsequential. This happened before I'd found out about *methylene blue.*

Foolishly, I took my still senile Mom to my Uncle's closed casket funeral. His surviving wife, my Mom's sister, and his kids (all adults by then) had elected to project photographic slides of the family upon the white wall of the chapel, for all the

attendees to gaze at, and to reminisce. The photos were of Jake, his wife, and his kids. Suddenly one of the projected photos was of my Mom's sister, Jake's wife, when she was about twenty-five years old. Looking at the photo, it was obvious that she (my Mom's sister), had been a very good-looking young woman. Of the four sisters, she was clearly the prettiest. The woman also had a wonderful caring personality. She was a man's woman, the kind of woman, who is made for one very masculine intelligent man, like my deceased Uncle.

When my senile Mom saw the photo of beautiful her sister on the chapel wall, she shouted into the silent solemn little chapel room filled mourners, "She sure doesn't look like that now!"

The fifty or so attendees were absolutely shocked, but many realized that my Mom was senile, hence she was forgiven, and her comment ignored. But, this would not be the last, nor the worst, of Mom's comments. Next, the minister presented a glowing history of my deceased Uncle. He summed-up his eulogy, by saying,

"And one day, we'll see Jake again, when we get to heaven."

Immediately, my christian Mom loudly countered with, “Jake’s not in heaven. He shot himself!”

Quickly and quietly as possible, I hustled her out of the chapel. Prior to Mom coming down with Alzheimers, she’d never have spoken like that. After she’d been taking it for a bit more than three weeks, Mom, Dad, and I were eating lunch in the dining room of the nursing home, when something completely unexpected happened. Bare-in-mind, that Mom was still in the nursing home. She’d forgotten what year it was, who the president was, and almost all of her friends were long forgotten. While waiting for the food to arrive that afternoon, Mom spoke-up.

“You know Joey, I’m starting to remember things.”

“Like what, Mom?” I inquired.

“Things, just things…” She answered.

“Okay Mom. What’s the address of the last place you lived, before getting on this cruise ship?” I asked her.

First, she laughed about my cruise ship comment. *At least, she seems to realize that the cruise thing is ridiculous! That’s good!* Apparently, she finally had come to realize she was not on a ship. When she

claimed to be remembering things, I had wrongly assumed she was just talking nonsense, and hadn't really begun to remember anything. But in response to my last question, Mom quickly and accurately gave me her last complete address: apartment number, street name, city, state, and even the zip code! Dad and I were dumbfounded. Like a miracle, Mom's memory appeared to be totally back online! *Could her memory really be okay?*

To further investigate, I asked her a series of questions, e.g., where various pieces of furniture had been located in their former apartment, what was stored in the various closets, what was in the drawers of her kitchen, who her neighbors had been, who her friends were, etc. To each question, Mom gave an accurate response. Not only had she correctly answered the questions, but she had done so with a normal relaxed inflection, and with complete matter-of-fact confidence… no confusion. Oddly enough, she also realized that she'd been suffering with Alzheimers, but no longer was. Dad and I were astounded! Her recovery was sudden and nothing short of a miracle. To the best of my knowledge, my Mom is the only Alzheimers patient in a nursing home, who recovered and moved out, back to

independent living. Writing this, she's now been out for over two years, and lives by herself in the assisted living portion of the retirement home. She moved into a large apartment with Dad, but then, Dad soon died of pneumonia just sly of ninety-two.

It bares repeating, that there's a good chance she's the only patient in America, diagnosed with Alzheimers, and was living in a nursing home, who then moved out and back to autonomous living! She dresses herself, goes to the dining hall, enjoys having visitors, and goes on walks through the nearby woods. Sadly, few of her older friends come to see her. Older people don't get out much to visit. Many are tangled-up with their responsibilities, their family, or various ailments, which often entail countless visits to the doctors. Many of the elderly, have to visit a doctor or go to a hospital several times a week. Profitable medicine not only uses up their time, but their savings, as well.

Another insult to the aged is that young people, once they've attained the approximate age of eleven, tend to avoid the elderly, yet by-in-large, no one enjoys company more than the old folks. Life is filled with a near endless supply of injustices. Next to certain diseases, and handicaps, old age may be the

worst life has to offer. If my Dad hadn't passed away, Mom would still be living with him, in the assisted living apartment. Until my last breath, I shall miss my wonderful Dad. The beginning of his end started when he went to the emergency room of a local hospital, because of low blood pressure.

While sitting in the waiting room of the ER, for four hours, Dad was exposed to a lot of sick coughing people. As a result, he contracted pneumonia in both lungs and died about twenty days later. He was just too old to fight the pernicious infection. The expensive i.v. antibiotics did virtually nothing, but run-up the inpatient hospital bill. Besides, after a stroke six months prior, Dad had gotten to the point that there was little joy left in his life. As deaths go, I suppose Dad's death wasn't too bad. I've heard pneumonia referred to as the 'old person's friend,' because of the relative ease of the death. The lungs just keep filling with fluid, you keep getting weaker, until the lungs no longer exchange enough oxygen, and finally you just blackout, then fade away.

For the most part, and aside from the coughing (actually not too much), he was fairly relaxed, during his last few days. He laid there propped-up on a couple of pillows, looking through his old watery

blue eyes, without showing the slightest emotion… none. He didn't even seem mildly sad. In his early adulthood, Dad had been a firing-breathing dynamo, and his blue eyes often fiercely burned, as if he was ready to conquer the world, and in a very real way, he did just that. But at the end, sick and weak with pneumonia, he silently waited for the inevitable, without a regret. Before he died, he'd periodically look around the ceiling of his room, as if he were acknowledging the presence of other beings… hallucinations, or dead relatives, or angels come to collect him… who knows?

While *methylene blue* did all that for Mom, the drug turned-out not to be a complete panacea. For almost two years her memory was fully back on line, then her short-term memory started to decay again, but at a far slower rate, especially when compared to the other Alzheimers patients, taking those expensive and ineffective drugs. Most of the nursing home's Alzheimers victims are now long dead. Even most of those, who contracted the disease after Mom. The mental improvements *methylene blue* granted my Mom far exceeded what I've seen of people using the other conventional Alzheimers medications (*aricept, cognex, exelon, razadyne, namenda*).

For Mom, *methylene blue* has been side effect free. That's not surprising when you consider all the countless numbers of people, who have taken it for chronic bladder infections, with no significant problem. However, like any other drug, there may be some minor percentage of people, who manifest adverse side effects. The drug was also used in the early 1890s to treat malaria. I only wish Mom could have gotten on that wondrous drug, sooner than she did. As mentioned, the drug seemed to work remarkably well for just about two years, then Mom's mind began to slowly deteriorate again, but has mentioned, not nearly as rapidly as she first had, nor has her mind become bad as it once had been, before she took the *methylene blue.*

Mom's mind was pretty far gone, by the time she first began taking the drug. Had she started taking *methylene blue* prophylactically, at the first first sign of Alzheimers, there's a very real possibility that she may never have succumbed to the marked cognitive decline! She is still functioning in assisted living. Death is one thing, but massive amounts of fearful confusion, without the slightest amount of dignity, was another.

How the *methylene blue* helps to reduce the

effects of Alzheimers may somehow be related to the fact that the drug can reduce defunct forms of hemoglobin to once again become functional hemoglobin. Consequently, there's perhaps more oxygen available to the elderly brain. Perhaps, methylene blue reduces the manufacture of the beta amyloid protein, since said protein is thought to be involved in the cause of the disease. Some folks speculate that methylene blue, since it may act like an antibody or antibiotic, reduces the body's need to make beta-amyloid, which in a way maybe acting like an antibody itself. If the *methylene blue* resolves the causative infection, wherever it resides in the body, then the immune system may reduce its production of beta amyloid, and this might account for attenuation of the dreaded Alzheimers. However, these things are simply speculation.

http://www.ageofautism.com/2012/10/what-is-causing-beta-amyloid-production-in-alzheimers-and-autism.html

There may also be a relationship between obesity and Alzheimers. If you just look at the countries with the highest levels of Alzheimer, they generally

appear to be the same ones with the highest levels of obesity. On the other hand, neither my maternal Grandpa, nor my Mom, were remotely obese. Still, they both ate lots of high fatty foods.

http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/cause-of-death/alzheimers-dementia/by-country/

http://www.worldobesity.org/resources/world-map-obesity/

Why it's taking so long for an Alzheimers vaccine to materialize is a scientific mystery. Ostensibly, one of the early Alzheimers vaccines produced meningitis in ten percent of the people, who took it. The latest vaccine, developed in Sweden, appears to be unsuccessful. Haven't the drug companies made enough money off of human suffering? Maybe the problem is that the brain is something of an immune-safe tissue, and so the necessary factors, created by the vaccine, just can't get in, can't cross the blood brain barrier.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3380391/Hope-Alzheimer-s-sufferers-vaccine-removes-tangles-brain-cause-memory-loss.html

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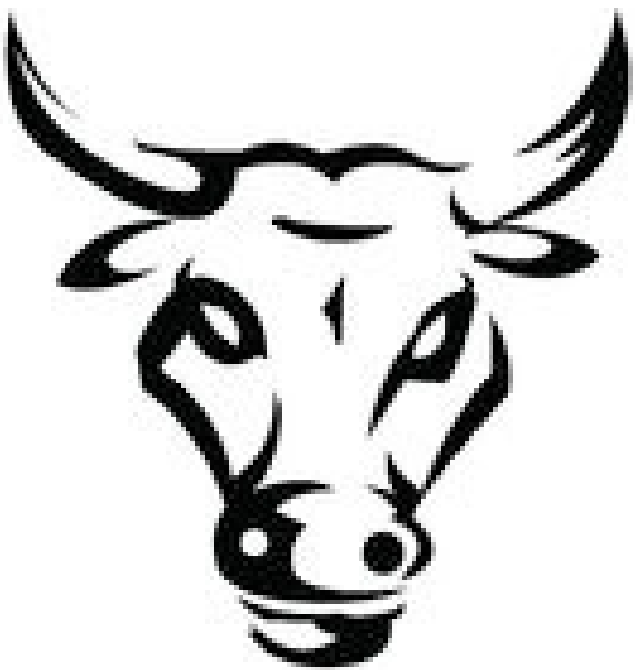

AWOL AT THE BULLFIGHTS

By far, the best part of my childhood was spent in Spain. Dad was the Executive Officer on the US Naval base in Rota, situated on the Atlantic coast of southern Spain, below Portugal. Although, since this text is pure fiction, Dad may have been stationed at was some other base in Spain, or in some other country. I loved southern Spain so much, that I still think about living there, even in my old age. Though, I'm not sure how today's politics and economy may have changed that region; still, I'd like to think that those kindly Andalusian folks are still there.

For roughly three years, Mom, Dad, and I lived in a beautiful 3000 square foot ranch-style house on a ninety foot cliff, over-looking the huge beautiful Bay of Cadiz. From scrutinizing photos on *Google Earth*, it's now easy to see that the once tall cliffs are now far lower, since the ocean appears to have appreciably risen, and so the bay waters have chewed further back into the land. As a result, the house of my childhood is no longer there. All that's

left of it is the concrete foundation, dangerously close to the very edge of the cliff. No doubt, the Navy demolished the house, since it was a structural hazard, threatening to fall over the cliff.

On clear days, I'd watch agile fish hawks, sporting light ginger and black feathers, hang in the air almost motionless, just out from the edge of, and above, the cliff. The birds would effortlessly ride the invisible warm air currents, ascending the vertical cliff face, from the hot sun-baked beach, below. When the wind was coming from the water, the birds would float over the water's edge, facing toward the Bay of Cadiz. But when the wind was coming from the land, the predators hovered over the water, facing the land, always poised facing into the wind. Most often, during the warmer parts of the day, the hawks with only the slightest muscular efforts stayed aloft, for hours. The birds looked like shimmering gossamer phantoms, hovering in the bright light, roughly one hundred and ten feet above the dark blue sea.

Those seemingly fragile, ever wary, hunters never failed to put on a spectacular aerial show. Behind our home, the airborne cast of hawks varied in number from five to fifteen. Each predator was on

the lookout for the careless fish, which strayed too close to the water's surface. Every so often, one or more of the hawks would drop-down from the cast, as the rest of the birds watched their fellow member zoom-in for the kill.

The raptorial dive was a rapid almost straight down decent, with wings and legs folded back. Small steering corrections were made, by simply tilting their mid-wing or pollex. The bird would drop its right shoulder (pollex… sort of like a reverse elbow), and so zoom to the right, or drop its left pollex and it would cut across the sky to the left, and then at the last fraction of a second, out from underneath its' feathery body, would flash the deadly sharp talons, as the wings would simultaneously spread-out wide, like two parachutes to catch the briny air, to slow the controlled crash into the unsuspecting fish, while the needle-sharp talons would drive through the fish's silvery scales, and deep into its sleek aquatic flesh. With the fish clutched in its steely talons, the tenacious hunting bird would then use its powerful wings to rapidly pump the air, determinedly plucking its prize from the sea, to carry it back into the air. Once speared by the sharp talons, rarely did the fish struggle.

The successful noble hunter would then return to its avian aerie (nest of a bird of prey), carefully constructed with twigs, leaves, sticks, and the occasional piece of paper or litter. The nest were usually situated along the upper reaches of the cliff face, about ten or twenty feet from the top. The returning parents would feed the ever-hungry young eyas (baby hawks). During these aerial gymnastics, I could hear the high-pitched young, adamantly demanding their parent's return with food. Sometimes I'd watch the hawks from the backyard; at other times, I'd watch from down on the beach. While I studied them, the ever patient hunters paid me no mind.

At the southwestern end of the Bay of Cadiz protrudes a long thin peninsula, with a broadened tip, upon which sits the ancient European city of Cadiz. Aerial photos make this peninsula look a lot like a Q-tip. On the northwestern end of the curving bay is the tiny sleepy little town of Rota. Both Rota and Cadiz, guarded the entrance to the bay, and were first colonized during the bronze age, by the mysterious ancient seafaring Phoenicians.

http://www.andalucia.com/cities/cadiz/

map.htm

In between Rota and Cadiz, were the aforementioned US Naval base and a small town called, Puerto de Santa Maria. If a ship came sailing or steaming out of the Mediterranean Sea, and made a right turn to head north, the Bay of Cadiz was the first safe Atlantic harbor, on the coast of southwestern Spain, halfway between Gibraltar and the southern border of Portugal. Cadiz is reputed by many archeological experts to be the oldest city in Europe. The Phoenicians, who settled it, were from Tyre, the twin city of ancient Babylon, located at the extreme eastern end of the Mediterranean, in what is now Lebanon. Though those ancient peoples may have had the phenotypic characteristics, and nucleotide sequences, of the modern day Arabs, they existed (1500 to 300 BC) eighteen hundred years ago, long before anyone heard of Islam or Christianity. The Phoenicians were polytheists, worshipping multiple gods; not unlike other Canaanite-derived peoples. Their gods correlated to stars, planets, and constellations… whatever spins your beanie.

Local rumor had it that the city of Cadiz, which

as I said, more or less sat on said bulbous tip of the narrow peninsula jutting out into the Eastern Atlantic, had been destroyed, and rebuilt six times… little wonder, it was demolished six times, since it virtually sat right out in the stormy Atlantic Ocean, unprotected, and was barely three feet above sea level. Sometimes I've wondered if perhaps the earliest city of Cadiz, might not have been submerged by the ocean, and was in fact the mysterious ancient lost city of Atlantis… perhaps, not. In fact, during certain high tides, the bulging tip of the peninsula could easily have been referred to as having been an island, since the land bridge, leading out to it, would occasionally be under water and washed away, causing the city to be disconnected from the mainland. In fact, the widened tip would then be an island. Fill-dirt was regularly trucked it to rebuild the land bridge to Spain-proper, and once again, make it a peninsula. Quite possibly, hundreds of years ago, at various times, the tip may have been an actual island. The City of Atlantis is alleged to have been beyond the 'Pillar of Hercules,' which most authorities feel is Gibraltar and the northern tip of Morocco, referred to as Jebel Musa, meaning Mountain Moses, the same Moses who is frequently discussed, both in the Quran and the Bible.

Also, the geography of Cadiz appears to fit the descriptive criteria for the ancient lost city. On the western side of Cadiz, you could make out the ancient buildings underwater at low tide, and so I and many others may have actually seen the legendary lost city, and never realized what we were looking at. On the other hand, there's a fair chance that famous discovery of Santorini is the lost Atlantis. Still, at Santorini, no actual city has been found, so I doubt that Santorini is the famous Atlantis.

Some of the streets in the older parts of Cadiz were particularly narrow. When the most recent city was first laid-out, no one had apparently anticipated vehicles like cars, dump trucks, or modern day eighteen wheelers. Many of the city's roads were only four, five, and six feet wide, and there was a bunch of two to three foot wide alleyways, for walking, or maybe a single horse could pass though. Furthermore, the buildings in the older parts of town, oft times, appeared to be less than perfectly vertical; many with a bit of a disconcerting tilt. Some of the parks in Cadiz contained trees which supposedly were brought back from the new world by Columbus.

Spain was a real eye-opener, especially since I was a young American child, who'd never been out

of the country. I was there under the reign of, the now deceased dictator, Francisco Franco. The country had more than its share of impoverishment, primarily owing to a not too distant bloody civil war. Since war is expensive, it frequently drains a country's coffers. Where does the money go, you ask? Most of it goes into the pockets of the industries, scattered around Europe, which manufactured the accouterments of war: guns, bullets, bombs, planes, uniforms, boots, grenades, mines, knives, artillery, trucks, C-rations, radios, bayonets, tanks, etc. In southern Spain there were few adults beggars, but many skinny little desperate dirty children, begging for anything they could get. Such forlorn kids, often became consummate actors; and, even though I said 'actors,' much of their despair was genuine. That's why I generally dressed like a beggar, and would rub dirt on my face and hands, whenever I visited the Cadiz, to avoid their sad pleas.

At one time, Spain had been the largest richest empire in the world, but when I was there it was poor. On November 16, 1532, Atahualpa, Lord of the Inca Empire, meant with 160 Spanish conquistadors under the command of Francisco Pizarro. The Spaniards had captured the young Inca Emperor.

Atahualpa offered to bring his captors a fortune in ransom and did. The amount of treasure was staggering. He agreed to fill a room with gold and silver, to secure his release, yet after he did so, the Spanish killed him, anyway. Psychopaths frequently, rise to the top of the heap, and the less educated get the bottom of the barrel. But remember folks, half the world is on the left side of the bellcurve. If you're on the right side, learn to be kind, and avoid arrogance.

When it comes to that ancient stolen Spanish gold and silver, you might consider a couple of things. Any historian worth his salt, is aware that the conquistadores and other Spaniards took gold from the New World; usually, to the detriment of the indigenous Indians, who were turned into slaves, and forced to do the mining, etc. Estimates on the total stolen amount of ancient gold was only around 35 to 40 tons. I say, "only" because from the beginning of the twentieth century, until around 1976, over 75,000 tons were mined.

A financial depression or recession usually occurs for two simple reasons. One is when that He just waited, but I thought I could tell he seemed to be wondering what might be coming afterwards, but

maybe notthe wealth is taken by another country, as can happen in a bloody war. But more often, the depression or recession is created, when the majority of the country's wealth is taken by a few businesses, e.g., war industries, oil companies, banks, etc. To better accomplish this, all you need is payouts to puppet politicians, and a gullible, docile public.

Some people thought that at the outset of the Spanish civil war, Spain's gold had been sent to Germany for 'safe-keeping,' but was never returned, ergo in effect, it had been 'stolen' by Germany. If so, perhaps Spain's gold was used by Hitler to prepare for and conduct yet another war, namely WWII, to purchase nefarious things like: arms, radios, planes, tanks, helmets, uniforms, bullets, cannons, tanks, ships, boots, grenades, bombs, and other materials, goods, and services which supported the war. Others have thought that the Russians got the same Spanish gold, when they came marching into Berlin, at the end of WWII. They (Russia) definitely got the German scientists, at least the ones who made chemical weapons, and we got the scientists who made the rockets. If the Russians did get the Spanish-German gold, then they too used it to make weapons for the cold war, again making: bombs, missiles,

submarines, planes, ships, guns, etc. That Russian war making effort continued till they went bankrupt and the Berlin Wall came down. The point here is that because of the never ending supply of big wars (hot and cold), a huge percentage of the world's wealth stays in the hands of various war industries.

Massive amounts of wealth are used and reused to feed the many war industries around the world. As mentioned, Russia used the Spanish-German-Russian gold and then most of their own wealth to build so much military armament, ergo they bankrupt their country, and then the cold war disappeared. In effect Russian military disbanded and they were laid wide open for the taking, but since the cold war is nothing but a big bluff to keep the war industries in business, nothing happened, we didn't invade Russia. If you think about the huge cost of even a small war, and the regularity of big and little wars, a huge amount of the earth's wealth just circulates from one war into the next, from one group of arms dealers, to the next. In that respect, war keeps the most of the earth's population poor, and suffering with injuries, the loss of loved ones, poverty, etc. It's more or less an indisputable fact that all the associated killing continues on, simply because of over developed

pieces of gray matter, representing things like greed, aggression, and hate.

Other Spaniards thought that the Spanish gold didn't go to Germany, but was sold to Russia and France to finance Spain's civil war. Either way, the gold would have gone to various war industries. Wars can't be fought without whooping amounts of money, and people, and often with the lives of blind fools. Regardless of what happened to the gold, the average Spaniard was left flat broke, due to the greed of the war industries, and their bribed politicians, who convince the ignorant masses that a war must be fought for some trumped-up 'legitimate' reason.

Currently, that's where the biggest chunk of America's budget now goes… to the US military, the military industrial complex, and other war-related companies, and agencies. Great countries often measure their worth in their ability to conquer, to make war, and in the process, they often go bankrupt, simply because those industries got too big, controlled their respective governments, took all the money, and bankrupted their citizens. The United States now has several times the amount (throw weight) and number of nuclear weapons, than does the entire rest of the world. Why? Are the space

aliens about to attack? Maybe, all the excess nukes is partially owing to the possibility that there are better ways to make weapons-grade nuclear material, than using an old fashion time-consuming centrifuge. All you need is a piece of material, that when vibrated, will allow the 235 to fall through and the 238 stays on the material.

When is enough money enough for the military industries, and when will war have stolen enough blood? The answer is when the war industries have drained the coffers and there's a depression or recession knocking on our doors, and telling you go live on the street, or when people begin to bitch and moan too loudly, so that the wealthy begin to fear a revolution. Don't forget that this country (the United States) was born in a revolution, due to economic repression. Not long after the first world war, the US went into a major depression. The war industries had absconded with most of the money, and what little was left the banks flat-out stole. The banks just closed their doors and kept all the common man's money. The fear and strains of poverty caused many people to commit suicide. Their poverty stricken lives were simply too tough to endure. A lot of men couldn't get work, and they and their families often

died of pneumonia. Many folks endured oodles of misery: the growl in the belly, the freezing cold without heat, untreated illnesses, death of loved ones, family separations, homelessness, and a million other forms of misery brought on by financial hardship. For some, massive wealth is more important than life itself. Some corporations are again carrying-out this destructive postulation, since they are literally destroying the earth for money's sake. Remember the Wall Street millionaires during the great depression, jumping from their office windows? The famous Will Rogers once said something to the effect that…

"When Wall Street took that tail spin, you had to stand in line to get a window to jump out of, and speculators were selling space for bodies in the East River."

Spain's war-induced depression, seemed to bring out the very best and worst in its people. As a young child in Spain, our family maid was the most financially desperate person, I've ever known; yet, categorically the most kind hearted. The woman should have been canonized. Carmen cooked our meals and cleaned our home, all for six cents an hour. She was about forty years old, but due to an

enormously stressful life, any physical beauty, she may have once possessed, had been overworked right out of her, and so she looked to be in her sixties. Nevertheless, dear Carmen was at her best, living in poverty, a regular Virgil.

"Maybe one day, we may be glad to remember even these hardships."

Virgil

For me, Vigil may have been partly off-base on that above quote. In extreme poverty, Carmen had birthed and raised six children, while her husband, a mean unemployed drunk, occasionally beat her. Perhaps, poverty had brought out the worst in him, and so dear Carmen sometimes came to work with a black eye or swollen facial features. But, she was Catholic, and so there was absolutely no possibility of divorce, especially with those six kids. Back then, short of murder, the Spanish courts never prosecuted husbands for beating their wives… never. It might have been criticized in private by the neighbors, nevertheless, it was socially accepted, and never ended-up in court. Talk about being trapped! Looking

at her gentle lean face, I could see slight indentations in her cheek bones, the edges of her forehead, and the angle of her jaw, from where her husband's knuckles had landed, during moments of drunken rage. The undeserved boney dimpling and recesses made her face appear slightly asymmetrical, and remarkably poignant. Every now and then, I've seen this same type of face in other women, though rarely. The woman, who endured the worse beating, I've ever laid eyes on, would be about eight years later, at a bus station, late one evening, in Mobile.

Never did Carmen complain or speak ill of her abusive husband. As a foolish child, when I asked her if he beat her, she would just press her lips tight together and then pull them wide, in a mock smile, then knowing that her smile had failed to convince, she'd look away. To me, beating Carmen was like trying to destroy pure sweetness and light, and so it required a person filled with the vilest form of evil, the very foulest form of being. Truly horrid people have often been born with the corresponding pieces of gray matter. Maybe, that was the first time, I experienced true loathing and hatred for another person, and it was someone I'd never meant, and never would meet. Carmen's beatings made me feel

helpless. Dad made the mistake of telling me that someone should shoot the man. This caused me to recall Dad's advice about killing certain people, and as mentioned I had no conscience till age forty. Also, Dad would always stressed the need to think for oneself.

"Don't be one of those brainwashed fools, who thinks that just because it's written in the US Constitution, or in the Bible, it must be correct. And that phrase about, 'the law is the law,' is also often anything but just. Think for yourself, Joey. Be your own man. Don't be a puppet!"

But then next, Dad oxymoronically reminded me that Carmen's home-life was none of our business, and Dad made sure I was never allowed to visit her home. He closed the issue by saying that I was too young to be worrying about such things.

We are capable of many things in all directions, of great virtues and great sins. And who in his mind has not probed the black water? Maybe we all have in us a secret pond where evil and ugly things germinate and grow strong.

East of Eden by John Steinbeck

Carmen had no such secret pond. What I gathered from Mom, who had driven Carmen home several times, yet always without me, was that Carmen and her family lived in a one room shack somewhere in the town of Puerto, down near a sharp bend in the Rio Guadalete, a fetid poor excuse for a river, and the aqueous recipient of a significant amount of raw sewage. It was like the minor smelly Ganges of southern Spain. Carmen knew that I hated her abusive husband, and she'd pointedly ask me not to come by her house.

"My home is so poor, I'm too embraced for you to see it, Joey." She'd humbly claim, but I knew it was a lie.

Carmen's words were to protect her husband, or maybe to protect me from myself. From what my parents and Carmen had told me, her shack was one of many, crowded together, and erected atop what used to be an old crumbling asphalt road, ergo the floor of her humble abode was indeed that crumbling asphalt, which was probably barely better than dirt. As a child of eleven, I seriously considered killing her husband, but needed a pistol, and didn't have access to one. Knowing that if I dressed like a poor Spanish

kid, and didn't speak to anyone, I could easily blend in with the local populace. Soon, I came to own a double barreled shotgun, but the weapon was too big to covertly carry through the streets of the town, without attracting attention. Even when the gun was broken down, the weapon's case was too large and heavy; especially since I was eleven.

Besides, as best as I could determine from conversations with Carmen, the husband was always surrounded by witnesses, in the form of his kids, other relatives, and neighbors. Carmen refused to divulge what bars he went to, or where he hung-out. She never showed me a photo of him, or of her kids. Without my ever saying anything negative about him, she knew I hated him. Carmen could read people much as did my Grandma's maid, Bernice; perhaps, poor people are better at reading people, since the poor are frequently more attuned to personalities, and by default, less apt to be concerned with the accouterments wealth.

Carmen certainly would have been better off without her brutish bum of a husband, and it would have made me feel empowered to have killed him. All I needed was the right opportunity. I couldn't follow Carmen home, since she went to work at a

Spanish family's home, when she left our house. She didn't get off from there, until sometime later, when I was at home asleep. Besides, I had to always be home for dinner, or Dad would have called the shore patrol and all hell would have broken loose. A few times, I wandered around the town of Puerto looking for Carmen's house but to no avail.

"While there are people who need killing, make absolutely certain he deserves it, then plan the murder in a vacuum, and never tell a soul." Dad would regularly instruct me,

During my long life, I've been involved in the death of at least five people, none of which I wanted to have to kill. On the other hand, I did plan on killing one person, but didn't, because of a visit from the government. Some of those killings are mentioned in these books, others not. Unlike many people, Dad definitely knew that certain people deserved killing, since as mentioned, he had attended the Nuremberg Trials. Up-close, Dad had seen the true murderous monsters of the planet trotted out into the glaring lights of the courtroom. He had listened to their crimes being read, and heard their translated responses. Supposedly Albert Speer had confessed his guilt, and so he was spared. None of

the rest of the monsters felt guilty. Dad said very little about the trials, but he'd visited the cruelest of Nazis in their cells. Though it was at the Wannsee Conference that Nazi Germany formally decided to exterminate the Jews; oddly enough, Nuremberg, where the warcrimes trails were held, is also where the Nazi party's annual rally was held in 1935, and that's where the party came forth with their laws, institutionalizing the racial beliefs of Nazi ideology. The laws created there in Nuremberg, denied German Jews the right of citizenship, and prohibited them from marrying, or having sex, with people of 'German blood.' Of course, these laws caused many Jews to see the handwriting on the wall, and so more than a few denied their genealogy. Perhaps, it was the wisest and most aggressive among them, who got the hell out of Dodge, and fled to other lands. Nuremberg is where the Nazis officially started their racial policies, and it's where it was finally officially judged, and a few of the top Nazis, who were guilty of murderous antisemitism, were hung. With the way certain wars are now being processed, perhaps it's time for another Nuremberg, and it should be held in our nation's capital.

Remember the old saying about evil flourishing,

when good people do nothing. It's an ill-founded theory, but sometimes I feel that the greatest evil is attracted to the best of people, so perchance that's why Carmen's husband chose her to marry. In general, too often ignorant people view evil as a distant phenomena, and even if it's near, then it should only be dealt with by something outside their reach, perhaps some governmental entities: the police, a grand jury, the courts, a judicial tribunal, some legislative body, etc. To most people, dealing with evil is always someone else's responsibility. It's probably not that the person is afraid to deal with the evil, it's just that most Americans, because of schools, churches, television, and the movies, have been programed not to kill people, who obviously need killing, even when it's a necessity.

https://www.npr.org/2015/03/30/395069137/open-cases-why-one-third-of-murders-in-america-go-unresolved

Over one-third of America's murders go unsolved, a phenomenally high statistic considering that many murderers make no attempt to hide their crime. And even if they're caught, should they hire a

lawyer like my Grandpa, they'll often go free. Far too often, legal efforts fall far short, and individual citizens should have acted. Generally, the minions of the legal profession have a blind faith in the law; that it will carry-out justice, but many cruel people rarely get caught, especially if they're bright. In my world, it is not only okay to take the law into your hands, but sometimes it's a moral obligation! That was my Dad's opinion.

The surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even-if you will-eccentricity. That is, something that can't be feigned, faked, imitated; something even a seasoned impostor couldn't be happy with.

Joseph Brodsky's, Commencement Address, at Williams College, in 1984. (Brodsky received the Nobel Prize for Literature three years after he made the above comment. In 1991, he became the United States Poet Laureate.)

In the winter, Carmen heated her family's homemade one room shack, by burning small aluminum cans of sterno, a flammable jellied alcohol that can be burned, while still in the can that it's sold

in. The short squatty cans of sterno were also used to cook her families' food. Carmen used candles for light, and extra heat, in the winter. Often the family of eight slept huddled together, under worn ratty blankets to help combat the cold. While poverty generally makes many selfish, Carmen remained unselfish.

Remarkably, Carmen was rarely ill. She carried plastic jugs to the town pump for her family's freshwater, since the nearby river was much too polluted by small factories, and the manure runoff from upstream farms, etc. My mother had once asked Carmen how she managed without a bathroom. Carmen shamefully said that in the morning, they'd make their bowel movements at the very edge of the river, and simply waited for the tide to come in to clean it away. Mom went on and on about how filthy that was. It reminded me of Grandma and her comments, concerning black people, and how Grandma had refused to allow Bernice to use the bathroom in her house.

Frequently, Carmen would show-up to work with an empty stomach. She would never steal… not even food, so when Mom wasn't around, I'd go in the kitchen, make a wholesome sandwich, with plenty of

meat, lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise. Then, I'd cut it in two vastly uneven pieces. I'd pick-up and eat the smaller portion, leaving the larger piece on the plate, then handing the plate to Carmen, I'd ask her to throw it away, just as I'd run outside to play, saying that I was going to the beach, or to a friend's house, and that I wouldn't be back for few hours. Later, I'd check the trash and the piece of sandwich was never there. Had I tried to simply give her the sandwich, she might not have accepted it, but even as a boy, I knew better than to try to humble a saint.

Every time Saint Carmen came to work for us, she would ask my Mother if she could take a shower. The maid's quarters in our house was a tiny room with a twin bed, and a very small bathroom, equipped with a toilet and stand-up metal walled stall shower. When Carmen took a shower, she would sing, what I assumed were, Catholic hymns, so it was easy to tell she loved the shower and loved the church; perchance, the shower was the high point in her day. I never understood why Mom just wouldn't say something like…

"Look Carmen… you don't have to 'ask' to take a shower. Just take one, whenever you want, and don't worry about it."

For that matter, my Mom could have simply ordered Carmen to take a shower, whenever she came to work, or just before leaving, or both. But Mom never did. Instead, she always waited for Carmen to ask, knowing full well that Carmen would. Then after graciously granting Carmen's humble request, Mom would clearly feel magnanimous, that she'd just have to tell me about it.

"You know it makes me feel so good, to allow Carmen to take a shower. I'm just glad I can help her like that. Her life is so tough, Joey." Mom would piously comment. *What a load…*

No doubt, a little of her mother (my maternal Grandma) resided within Mom… some peculiar little familial pieces of gray matter. As mentioned, in the late afternoon, when Carmen left our house, she went to her second job, cleaning and cooking for yet another family, a wealthy Spanish family. There, Carmen was paid the equivalent of five cents per hour. Remember that all of Spain's wealth had gone to war, and so because of the country's hardship, Mom 'got' Carmen for six cents an hour. When I asked Mom why we didn't pay her more, Mom disturbingly explained.

"You don't want to spoil, her. If we did that, then

all the other maids, working on the base, might expect more, too; and, we don't want to be causing trouble, Joey."

Each day, exhausted after working her two jobs, Carmen walked two miles, to her family's shack to cook and clean, for a third, and last, time. Then, she'd sleep for three or four hours, get-up and come back to work at our house, again. That was her daily routine, except for those occasions, where her drunk husband would beat her too severely to go to work. Sunday was her day off, and she spent nearly the entire day attending mass, then afterwards she'd clean the church for free. Carmen had been told by the priests and nuns, that being able to serve the church was a privilege, and the Lord would bless her. Carmen, who'd been raised in the church, actually believed them. For all her saintliness, Carmen was plainly gullible; but, in one way or another aren't we all?

For that reason and others, I was amazed that anyone joined the Catholic church. Granted they have their charities and other good deeds, but they also have their greed. The church reminds me of the multibillionaire, who gives a million dollars to some charity, and thinks he or she has really been

magnanimous. Mom, Dad, and I visited many large cathedrals throughout Europe, yet never once while being there, did I see a skinny, dirty, or ill dressed priest. The massive wealth, displayed in those cathedrals, was every bit as staggering, as the pathetic poverty in the surrounding streets. The priests and nuns lived in clean comfortable accommodations. According to Carmen, who cleaned their places, the priests lived in large lavish quarters. They all ate plenty of rich food, drank expensive wines (donated by the surrounding bodegas), and wanted for nothing in life. The clergy of the cathedral received minimal support from the Vatican, and most support came from local contributions. Even poor Carmen, with six kids and a drunk abusive husband, gave ten percent of her income to the church. Dad found-out about the church receiving minimal Vatican support from a Spanish admiral at a club, called, *Hay Motivo*, to which Dad belonged for three years. The members of the club were Spanish and American military men. The nuns shopped in the markets, frequently not being charged for their selections of food and goods, and all the cleaning of the cathedral and the 'holy' residences was done by volunteers, like Carmen. The local restaurants often brought food to the church.

Gentle Carmen looked well beyond her biological age, and possessed impressively protruding deep blue varicose veins, the size of thin garden hoses, twisting and snaking-up both her muscular pale calves and thighs. When I first saw those veins, I was shocked and didn't know what they were, until my Mom explained. When I asked Mom what caused them, she said being on her feet too long. But while Carmen was no beauty, she was an unpretentious saint, and I loved her deeply. I wished that my own mother had been more like her. You can't help but love profound goodness. The immensity of Carmen's virtue remains unsurpassed. Once Mom saw me putting a couple of dollars into Carmen's pocketbook, and she admonished me.

"It might spoil her, Joey. Don't do that, again. She might come to expect it. You're just too young to understand."

Again, this reminded me of my maternal Grandma. Every now and then, Mom would give Carmen a few pieces of used clothing. She'd would hand over the used clothes, one piece at a time, as if she were bestowing on Carmen the crown jewels. Mom loved herself for giving Carmen those pieces of worthless secondhand clothing, and Mom always had

something to say, concerning each and every piece.

“And when it gets cold, jacket this will help to keep you warm.”

“This pair of pants will probably fit one of your sons.”

“Don’t you just love the color of this scarf?”

“This blouse will match your eyes, Carmen.”

“Just feel the material, and there’s only a little wear on the collar.It’s practically new.”

“These socks still have some good wear in them. It’s just a tiny hole. Perhaps, you could just stitch it up.”

Carmen would thank Mom for each and every piece. Excluding my Grandpa and a few others, that kind of self-aggrandizing generosity is Mom’s weird family trait. Many of Mom’s family members are famous for giving used gifts, or things gleaned at greatly reduced prices, from: yard sales, thrift stores, flea markets, etc., for birthday and Christmas gifts. They don’t waste money on new gifts, or things the recipient might actually desire. To add insult to injury, they love to expound on the value of the gift, much as a salesman might try to persuade you to buy

an inferior product, and actually believe that you've fallen for their phony pitch. You're forced to act appreciative, or be accused of being ungrateful.

One of my older family members, who likes to give used gifts, will expound on the gift so much, that the recipient is repeatedly forced to thank them, and to pretend that the gift is indeed grand, just to get them to shut-up. Many times, I've had to do that; then later, I've thrown the useless gifts away, or dropped them in a *Goodwill* donation box. One of my Aunts is the world champion at ridiculous gift giving. She's a good person but a laughable gift giver. Such gift givers actually believe that the people, they've given the gift to, love the worthless gift. Just once, I'd like to have heard my Mom or one of my Mother's family members ask me what I'd really like to have for a birthday gift. Sadly, Dad left it up to Mom as to what I received.The problem with Mom and her family's strange gift-giving technique is that they seem to believe that they're magnanimous. They seem to be completely blind to how stingy they are. They take no pleasure in giving, other than it gives them something to brag about; and mind you, these family members are far from poor people. Likely, they are such misers because they witnessed the tail

end of the depression.

Allow me to give you another example of my Mother's gift-giving technique. Mom once owned a love seat, which she gave away, free of charge, to a family friend, a doctor's wife. As best I recall, Mom had gotten it at a thrift store for next to nothing. Later when Mom went to visit the doctor's wife, she had the audacity to ask the doctor's wife, "How are you liking the love seat I gave you?"

The doctor's wife politely answered that she really liked it. That answer was in fact a polite lie, for indeed the love seat was horribly uncomfortable, and truly an ugly little piece of furniture. In fact, instead of stain and varnish being used on the wooden parts of the loveseat, brown paint had been applied. Mom then took this opportunity to reply, something to the effect of…

"Good! I'm glad you like it. You can just pay me $500 for it, whenever you feel like it."

Of course, the doctor's wife, who informed me about the incident, could have been lying, but knowing my Mom and the nature of her family, I'm fairly certain that her story is true. We all start-out as children, born with certain DNA-created brain

circuits, and then there are also those early experiences, which help mold our personalities.

Children who are born with greedy circuits and are raised in poverty, or who have witnessed extreme poverty, may remain stingy to an extreme fault. In some people, poverty creates a form of permanent psychic crippling, a type of mystical neurological mutilation, rather than simple unpleasant memories. Too frequently, those people begin to see and hear everything in terms of their insatiable greed. People, who have not experienced first-hand such traumatic financial hardship, may never comprehend its destructive effects. When it comes to money, it's hard to find a well balanced individual… some may be too greedy, where others may be too generous or wasteful, there are probably too few in between.

As mentioned, throughout her miserable life, Carmen never voiced a single complaint. And as poor as she was, she always brought me a small gift, when she arrived at our house. Usually the gift was a bite-sized piece of hard candy, or a small chocolate-drop, wrapped in colored foil. Spanish stores sold such candy… ten pieces for one peseta (about one and a half cents). I ran the risk of eating the milk chocolate, since many of the cows in Spain carried

bovine tuberculosis, which could be transferred to humans, via milk, but as a child, I foolishly considered myself bulletproof. I always did my best to let Carmen know how much I enjoyed the candy, without appearing to over do it. Later, I'd test positive for having had TB, but apparently my body threw off the illness, so I guess I was bulletproof.

Unlike most of the other maids, as well as the American wives on the base, Carmen was never given to idle gossip. Instead, she counted her blessings, which were far and few between, except of course for her six children. Whenever she was done with her assigned tasks, I'd find her sitting on the bed in the maids quarters, reading her Bible, or praying the rosary, sometimes speaking out loud and other times silently praying with bowed head. Those things seemed to bring her inner peace, which she never apparently experienced in the secular world. Her nonspiritual existence was ninety-four percent abysmal. The Bible and church formed her fantasy life. Such blind belief is what, for centuries, allowed the Catholic church to ride ruff-shod, over their poor parishioners.

Whatever the government and military industrialists hadn't stolen in the aforementioned

Spanish civil war, the church bled from the people, using rusty scalpels sharpened by the raspy confabulations of guilt, forgiveness, obligation, heaven, hell, etc. Greed can always find a way, even if it's making money off poor souls. Maybe that's why Jesus got nailed-up, so the Vatican could become rich. Oddly enough, the clergy usually believe in what they preach, just like soldiers believe in the justification for killing, in unjust wars. Too few people think for themselves. It's generally a good idea to stop and actually think… asking yourself questions like, "Is this religion the honest representation of a power which is capable of creating the entire universe?" or "Should I really go kill people, in a foreign land, because some politicians think it's a good idea?" or "Would God really burn people forever, just because they don't believe in Him or his son?"

If only arrogant lunatics think they're in full control, what of God?

Thought and Fear by Willey R. Mosey

As a child, I vowed that when I got to where I

earned an actual living wage, I'd find Carmen and help her out of poverty. So, after I became a member of the work-a-day world, making minimum wage, I asked a young naval officer, who'd recently received orders to the Naval Base in Rota, Spain, to find dear Carmen. I had given him her name, physical description, birthday, and roughly where she lived in Puerto de Santa Maria, hoping he'd locate her, and send me a dependable address, so I could mail her a 'hello' letter. Before sending money, I wanted to make sure she got a P.O. Box, so her abusive husband wouldn't steal it.

Once in Spain, the young officer did as promised, and went to Puerto, to look for Carmen. A few days later, he called and told me that she'd died ten years, earlier. The officer never found-out how she'd died. I'm nearly positive that I'll never make it to heaven, but I'd like to go for one minute, if for no other reason, than to see Saint Carmen, just one more time. The streets of gold sound pretty weird and strangely boring, the description of paradise in the Koran doesn't seem too interesting, either. What's the big deal about streets of gold? If you've gained eternal life and happiness, who cares about gold streets, or twelve jeweled gates, or gardens, or rivers, clothes,

or couches, etc.? Besides, walking on metal streets all day has to be tough on the arches; but then, maybe God hands-out *Nike Airs*. Do you think that there's the slightest chance that such things are real? It may seem a bit weird, but try thinking for yourself.

As previously mentioned, about twenty years, before I arrived in Spain, and roughly ten years before I was born, Spain had gone through a bloody civil war (1936-1939). About 1,000,000 died in that war, when the entire population of Spain was only about 25,000,000. I knew that it must have been extremely gory, because when my parents slept, I'd sometimes get up, pour a whiskey, and go into my Dad's study, turn on his desk lamp, and thumb through his classified papers and books. One of those books had a hard tannish cover, which had been red-stamped 'classified.' It contained literally thousands of little photos of people, whom Francisco Franco (Spain's Dictator) had ordered executed, by firing squad. All those photos were shot from the shoulders or neck up. Most of the dead had been shot several times in the face, ensuring a quick death. I examined each of the thousands of photos, which took several nights to complete. I challenged myself to look at each and every photo. At some point during this task,

the grisly pics had no longer had any effect, maybe because of the booze.

Those Spanish political executions had continued for six years, after the end of the civil war! Estimates have run from 32,000 to 72,000, post-war prisoners were executed; a drop in the bucket compared to people like Stalin or Mao, but a whole bunch of death, nonetheless. With Dad's classified book, I gazed into the dead faces of those thousands of dead men. Those gruesome photos, and my father's screaming in his dreams, forced me realize early in life, that war was probably nothing like the movies, the popular paperbacks, or even as the news networks portrayed… no heroic music playing, no feeling of fulfillment for having helped to win the fight, but perchance war is more like feelings, such as: fear, loss, depression, and maybe with a little *PTSD* (post-traumatic stress disorder) stirred-in. And after watching Dad's interactions with his war buddies, I got the distinct impression that those in combat, primarily fight for each other, rather for some patriotic ideal. Nothing bonds people together quite like depending on each other to survive. These were casual observations made by a ten year old child, so they could well be wrong, yet I still believe

them valid.

And so, as a young boy, it occurred to me that the military ceremonies, where pieces of pot metal and cloth are pinned on the uniforms of combat veterans, may be more for the audience, than for the soldier. Medals and ribbons could seem a bit puerile or meaningless to a truly heroic individual. The medals usually just end-up sitting in some drawer, until death comes, and then sometimes the person is buried in their uniform, that one last time the metal is again pinned to the burial uniform. At the medal ceremony, the man or woman stands before the viewing public, that often haven't been to war and therefore haven't a clue about what the metal winner went through. The medal winner has a piece of metal and cloth pinned to their coat, for having overcome fear and survived the grim reaper, or perhaps delving-out some amount of death to the enemy, or perhaps he or she saved their comrades, or sustained a battle wound, or the metal was just for just having been present in the region of conflict. Don't get me wrong, for I greatly admire the men and women of great courage. I just find the medal ceremony to be inadequate. Why not give them money, instead of a piece of pot medal and cloth?

If I were a combat vet, which I'm definitely not, I don't know how I'd feel about the medal ceremony. However, from the outside looking-in, the medal ceremony seems a bit odd. People are there to pay homage to the soldier, yet they have no genuine idea about the experience to which they are paying homage, while the soldier and his combat buddies, know far too well. For the audience, it's a bit like going to the circus, while wearing a blindfold, or attending a speech being delivered in an unknown foreign tongue.

My Dad received many medals. When he was quite old, he was invited to attend a Pearl Harbor Survivors ceremony at a Naval Aviation Museum in neighboring Florida, on a Navy base. Dad had been on the battleship USS Oklahoma, when it was fatally struck with four torpedoes, on the morning of December 7th, 1941. The explosions threw Dad off his bunk and onto the hard steel deck. He told me that he had assumed that the ship's boilers had blown, never imagining that it was an enemy sneak attack. Dad opened the door to his room to escape, but the passageway was jam-packed with panicking sailors, trying to get topside, so he closed his door, and used his pocket knife, to remove the large screws

which held the room's air vent cover. Once the vent cover was removed, Dad climbed-up through the metal ductwork, and worked his way up and onto the steel deck of the ship. As the huge battleship was 'turning turtle,' Dad just walked across the tilting deck, climbed over the ship's railing, and continued to walk along the side of the ship, till finally he was standing on the ship's keel, where he stood watching the Japanese attack the dock and ships. Then, a Japanese plane suddenly zoomed in, opened fire with its machine-guns, strafing the kneel, ergo Dad and several others, dove-off into the water, and swam to a nearby dock ladder. Some of the men, who remained on the hull, died.

After the attack, Dad spent the rest of the day with two other men, rowing around the harbor in a wooden rowboat, pulling dead bodies out of the harbor, and then taking them to shore; laying them out like rows of chord wood. The bodies were laid face-up, arms by their sides. Later, Dad went looking for a pair of shoes. As night closed in, he fell asleep from exhaustion in the grass, next to a van. That was Dad's day of infamy. That may well be one of the very rare times, when the United States legitimately went to war.

"…Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."
"The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific…"

Franklin D. Roosevelt

At the aforementioned Pearl Harbor ceremony, fifty years after the tragic event, there weren't a lot of old men still alive and able to receive the Pearl Harbor Survivor's medal, maybe fifty. I watched Dad stand in that auspicious little group with his head bowed, while a minister said a prayer, and I realized that none of us standing there, including the minister, had the slightest idea about what that little group of old men had gone through. Even so, we were the beneficiaries of those men's sacrifice and subsequent deeds, but I'm not too sure that the ceremony did the trick… not for them, they deserved

a bit more. Most of the survivors looked aged and frail, with one foot in the grave, but they were America's greatest generation. None of the men moved or spoke. They simply stood there, with their heads bowed, probably recalling that fateful day, December 7th 1941, while we looked on, at what we knew not. Once the prayer had finished, the old veterans looked at each other, none of them looked at us, standing and watching them! They were there for each other! It seemed that they knew something that the rest of us didn't. The onlookers were a bit like a group of first graders, attending a ceremony, where Albert Einstein is presented an award for his theory of relativity.

After the prayer, the survivors patted each other on the back and shook hands. They talked a little, and then a few minutes later, it was time to leave, and drive back to Mobile. On the ride home, Dad never said anything about the medal, or about the attack on Pearl. While saying, 'thank you' is important and necessary, sometimes it is also insignificant, and in some way, the trivial little medal makes it seem strange. To my way of thinking, this is never more obvious, than when the nation's president, usually a lowly pride-filled lying

politician, bestows the Medal of Honor, on a true hero, a man of profound courage. In some cases, it's something like Al Capone, blessing Mother Theresa. When the career politician bestows such an honor, you can tell that in most cases not only do they not have a clue about heroism, but they seem to think that the ceremony is as much about them, as it is about the Medal of Honor recipient. Perhaps we should have a group of former medal winners, bestowing the medal on new recipients.

Another strange military-related phenomena, is that often certain military people and some civilians, who have been deprived of combat, worship the idea of being in combat, and may even worship the combat veterans, to the point that they look for acceptance amongst those vets, as if they too are combat veterans, when they are anything but. These worshipers of combat vets, often seem to worship war. Yet, the experienced combat vets generally don't remotely worship war. Vets may share the experience between themselves, but many don't. I once had a bipolar friend, who was a Green Beret and disabled, while on maneuvers in Colorado, and so he was honorably discharged from the service, before he could actually participate in combat.

Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.

Samuel Johnson

Thereafter, the ex-green beret spent a large portion of his civilian life almost desperately worshipping various people, who'd been to war. He adored the idea of war; whereas the actual combat-experienced green berets, whom I've known, generally hated war. Those combat vets were brave and had courageously fought in battle, but from conversations with them, it was clear that they only fought for the guy fighting next to them… not for the pipe dream, they first signed-up for, and not because they believed what the politicians had been saying about the reason for the war. In the wars after WWII, I don't think anyone has truly believed they were protecting the homeland, or fighting for freedom and democracy.

That aforementioned disabled former green beret would go to various military events, banquets, ceremonies, etc., desperately trying to meet and greet combat vets. He'd go to book signings, if one of the combat soldiers had written a book. He'd usually

pump the vets for war stories, and for their camaraderie, but while the vets would be friendly and polite, they didn't seem to relish reliving the war for a non-combat vet, and usually didn't honestly extend camaraderie. Few, if any folks, chose to establish a lasting friendship with him.

Perhaps, the best combat pilot, who ever lived was the infamous Red Baron, the German, Manfred Von Richthofen. If you're bored one day, read about his ideas on war, after he'd spent roughly twenty years in countless aerial battles, shooting down about eighty planes and having twenty-four medals pinned to his chest. In some manner, he began to fail to see the difference between his people and his enemies, and so it was clear that political ideologies had begun to fade in importance, and were not his motivation for fighting. He fought for his comrades and simply for the thrill of the fight itself. It seemed he came to respect his aerial adversaries, more than he respected the leaders of his own country. Perchance, only the 'non-indoctrinated' actually worship war.

https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/red-barons-autobiography-manfred-

richthofen/1100404591?
st=SEM&sid=BNB_DSA&sourceId=SEMGoNBR&dpid=tdt

The true etiology of war is the benefit it brings to the wealthy industrialists, who manufacture and selling war materials. To the military industrialists, everyone involved in the war is perceived as a form of cannon fodder… expendable nobodies. Yet, without that cannon fodder, without those valiant expendables, there'd be no profits. A huge part of the American economy depends on war, or at least on a juicy paranoia-producing cold war.

As I mentioned, Dad had experienced WWII in the pacific theater, island by island, but mostly from the air. Soon after VJ day, Dad participated in the Korean conflict, and then came the protracted cold war with Russia. Dad didn't seem to take pride in all the medals he'd won. He only wore them, when the occasion required them. Otherwise, he never mentioned them. The medals sat in boxes, under his sock drawer. Once retired, he just threw them out, ergo he was buried without them. If I inquired about the metals, Dad would completely dodge my questions. After he died, I looked for the medals, but they only existed on old military photographs of Dad.

I've thought about going to a near-by Navy base, and trying to obtain copies of Dad's medals, which relatives sometimes do, but I'd feel rather hypocritical. As a remembrance, I have his traditional triangle-folded coffin flag, with the twenty-one empty brass shell casings wrapped inside. The folded flag just sits in a drawer of my bureau. I've thought about putting it in a glass case, and placing it out on display, but why? It would only serve to depress me, when I looked at it. Dad certainly deserved a better son. He went to his grave, never telling Mom or me about the actual contents of his screaming dreams; only admitting, that they had to do with the war with Japan. He was in the process of dying, when he finally divulged that fact. He was buried with full military honors, and nothing ever felt sadder than the blowing of taps and the twenty-one gun salute… nothing! That day shattered me. I broke down in front of my family and Dad's friends, yet I could have cared less. I just thanked them for coming, then I left the ceremony with Mom.

http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/22/092212203.jpg

To get to Spain, Mom, Dad, and I traveled across the Atlantic on a WWII vintage gray military transport ship, the USS Patch. Photos of the old ship are still online. It had been originally used as an Army transport ship, during the war, but was repainted, renamed, and refitted, to later be used by the Navy. When we rode on it, the ship was a battleship gray, had two smokestacks, a few defunct guns, and some animal cages near the fantail, used for the passengers brought their pets along. After our voyage, the guns were removed. I recall that the sound of the engines helped me to sleep, and that there was plenty of sleep-inducing booze onboard. I also remember playing ping-pong onboard. Back then, I loved the fast paced sport. After crossing the Atlantic, the ship docked along side the giant concrete pier of the base at Rota, Spain. But, long before the ship docked, while we were still a few miles off the Spanish coast, far out in the Atlantic, I began to get a whiff of what smelled like what you might flush down the commode. Bare-in-mind, that I was standing at the ship's railing with Mom and Dad, waiting for my first glimpse of Spain's west coast, yet the coast line was still well over the horizon, and about ten miles away.

“What the heck smells so bad?” I asked my parents.

“I don’t know Joey, but it’s certainly stinks. Smells like a sewage pipe must have broken, somewhere on this ship.” Mom responded, wrinkling her nose.

Dad just shrugged his shoulders, affirming that there was indeed a bad smell in the air, but he apparently didn’t know from where it was emanating. Then, an older sailor, standing behind us on the deck, who’d made the trans-Atlantic trip several times, spoke up.

“That smell is coming from Spain, sonny. It lets us know, when we’re getting close.” He explained.

My ten year old brain hardly knew what to make of his strange comment. *How could you possibly smell something so far away?* Spain was still over the horizon. *Why would a country smell so bad? It smells like it came from Satan’s butt hole.* I was hoping that the sailor simply had an eccentric sense of humor, because if Spain really smelled that bad, from clean over the horizon, I knew I couldn’t possibly live there. *Just imagine how bad it’s gonna be went we get there. I’ll be sick all the time, if this guy’s right.*

“What do you mean? Are you saying that Spain smells like that… the whole country?” I questioned.

Geez! I was seriously concerned that I might become horribly sick, having to smell such a rotten stench on a constant basis! Suddenly, I wanted to go back to America.

“Yeah, that’s pretty much true, son. They got lots of open sewers in Spain, and there aren’t enough bathrooms, so sometimes, people just go wherever they can, right outside. But don’t worry, after a day or two, you won’t even notice that rosy smell. You get accustomed it.” He said, while taping the side of his nose, with his bent index finger, then he nodded his head and winked, as if to say, ‘*it’ll be okay.*’

“I remember that some of the towns in China, smelled fairly bad, as well, and he’s right, Joey, you do get used to it.” Dad reassured.

I hoped that what Dad and the sailor had said was true; that after a day or two, I wouldn’t notice such a nauseating odor, and as it turned out, Dad and the sailor were correct. In fact, two days after arriving in Spain, I had completely adjusted to the rancid odor. Later, I’d reiterate the old sailor’s story to the occasional newcomer, arriving at the base,

who also wondered about the smell, and I would tap the side of my nose, wink, and nod. Aside from the initial worrisome odor, all in all, from ages ten through thirteen, I grew to love the wondrous country of Spain, especially it's loving people. In general, the Spanish were a far kinder, more lively, and outgoing, lot. For the three years, I spent there, it was a land of true excitement. I experienced things there, I could never have experienced in the United States.

Obviously, there are loving and kind Americans; but per capita, there seem to be more such people in southern Spain. And while there are some extremely arrogant Spaniards, per capita, it seems there are many more such folks in America. Spain offered me many astonishing things; which I never would have experienced in the United States. The Spanish culture was substantially more thrilling. Now with the installation of modern sewer systems, Spain no longer smells anything like that. Recently, I was in Barcelona (northeast coast), with my child… my favorite person in my favorite city. Besides its over-the-top historical buildings, great clubs, and restaurants, one of it's more surprisingly pleasant aspects, is that the police are outgoing and friendly.

They frequently speak with the public, while smiling and giving directions, and making helpful suggestions. I even saw them carrying shopping bags for older citizens. They actually protect and serve, rather than help, protect, and make too many people miserable. The crime rate in Barcelona is far lower than any large city in America.

Most of the cops are on the street, standing on the corners or walking the beat; comparatively few drive police cars. This keeps them more in touch with the people. The cops get to know the people, rather than remaining isolated and aloof in their cars. While you might think that such police behavior is a bad idea, and that the police need to maintain a more stoic and detached attitude, oddly enough, there is hardly any crime in Barcelona! {The London police are also extremely nice!} The police in Barcelona know how to effectively interact with the common people. Crime is so low in Barcelona, that groups of partying young girls can be seen, safely and happily walking around any part of the city, at three in the morning. Rapes and muggings are practically nonexistent. The only chronic criminals are pickpockets, most of which, seem to be desperate poverty stricken teenage girls.

As a child of ten, arriving in Rota, one of the first unexpected pleasantries I noticed was that the Spanish women would frequently breast feed their children, in public. Never had I seen such a custom in the US, ergo I never dreamed that Spain would have such a wonderful custom. In Spain, I went from never having seen any living breasts, except of course for my Mom's, to seeing great numbers of beautiful breasts! Many times, my Dad had to remind me to stop staring.

Occasionally, I even saw kids, as old as five and six, breast feeding. Their mother might be sitting outside of a cafe, or standing on the sidewalk, or sitting down inside a restaurant, etc. A few times, both breasts were fully exposed, and two children would be standing-up breast feeding. Viva España! In a way, you might think me a perverse child for being turned-on by women breastfeeding, but what can I say? I was a young male child, who probably only thought about sex very few seconds.

Another exhilarating perk Spain provided was the gory, albeit action-packed, bullfights. La Plaza de Toros (The Plaza of Bulls) was vastly more exciting than any other sporting event could possibly be, unless you brought back the ancient gladiators. It

sure as hell beat baseball, football, boxing, MMA, and basketball, and I love all those sports, as well.

Much of the appeal of the bullfight was that death was always in the offing. As such, I bore witness to the deaths of many horses and bulls, as well as some serious human injuries. Never did I see a matador get killed, yet a few times, it was close, with the matador being carried from the bullring to a waiting ambulance. Back then, one aficionado told me that the average bullfighter sustained one goring per year! The bullfights in Southern Spain were all the blood and gore my child's mind could savor.

You might want to say that the reason that I enjoyed La Plaza de Toros was because I was still young and impressionable enough, not to have been successfully programed against violence, not to have rejected what comes naturally. Since the crowd loved the violence, so did I. I'm absolutely certain my enjoyment of blood and savagery was purely instinctual, and there are a lot of people just like me. The average attendee of the bullfights delights in, if not craves, violence. Considering my young age and the number of fights I attended, the bloody sport created something of a hunger in me, for there is indeed a piece of hardwired gray matter designed,

not only to carry-out violence, but to enjoy watching it. I tried to attend the fights, as often as I could seek away from the navy base. Take my word for it, most people who watch MMA fighting, don't do so just to analyze the fighting techniques. At age ten, I had not been taught that blood and violence were completely unacceptable, especially considering my Dad's repeated advice about killing those, who needed to be killed. Hence, that primitive more brutal portions of my limbic brain were as yet uncorrupted, ergo the bullfights were nothing short of captivating.

Today, most middle and upper class kids are often programmed against violence, yet the children of lower socioeconomic groups, who are more apt to be exposed to criminals doings (it's pretty much a fact that there is usually a strong correlation between crime and poverty… the greater the poverty, the greater the crime). Poorer kids are also more apt to come from gang neighborhoods. This is not to say that there aren't rich violent kids for indeed there are, and there are some kind and gentle poor kids, as well. Perhaps, TV, movies, and video games dish-out violence and gore more than we'd like to believe, or maybe it's just the nature of certain neighborhoods, or some parents aren't doing a good job parenting.

On the other hand, it may be that those males, with the more aggressive brains, are apt to mate more frequently. If that is true, the overall percentage of aggressive people may grow over time. Of course, all that's only idle speculation.

Mom and Dad took me to my first bullfight. Mom was excited to go, and initially looked forward to it. However, once the event began, it was quickly obvious that the event was too untamed for her genteel southern upbringing. After one more diplomatically required attendance, neither Dad nor Mom wanted to go, anymore. Dad was simply too busy and Mom couldn't handle the bloody gore, but as mentioned, I was young and not programed against such sanguine violence, and I savored it. A tremendous amount of blood is spilled in even a low-key bullfight; the picadores, with their lances, and banderilleros, with their sharp colorful banderillas, and the matador with his death-dealing sword.

At first, I was surprised that Mom found it difficult to watch the fights, and was disappointed, when she announced that we wouldn't be returning, but that was before I thought about climbing over the base fence, and going by myself. Mom never grasped the concept of how hugely different people's

taste can be. I was especially surprised that Dad agreed not to attend; after all, he and I had watched countless boxing matches together on TV, while drinking *PBR,* and/or whiskey, and so I knew he enjoyed violence. Perhaps, Dad had witnessed enough violence and death in his life in war. While war is generally 'authorized' by the question judgement of a greed-minded and corporately-controlled government, bullfighting had no such sanctioning. In that respect, at least bullfighting is more honest.

But even though my folks had given-up on going to the bullfights, I was not to be deterred, and as mentioned, took to climbing the base's six foot chain-link perimeter fence, with its' three strands of barbed wire. All that blood and violence was like a drug for me. Most weekends, my parents assumed that I was out hiking around in the woods, or over at a friend's house, or down on the beach, etc., when in truth, I was at the bullfights. The closest bullring was in nearby Puerto de Santa Maria, and Cadiz was only a twenty minute ferryboat ride, across the bay. Every now and then, I'd catch the bus in Puerto de Santa Maria to ride to a bullfight in Jerez de La Frontera. A couple of times, I'd ridden the bus to the more

distant and larger city of Seville, but that was risky, since I wouldn't get home until late. It was almost a two hour ride there on the bus. If I'd have missed the return bus, Dad would have been beyond pissed.

At ages ten, eleven, and twelve, sneaking away to the bullfights, or to see a particular prostitute are what inspired me to extricate myself from having to attend church. As I saw it, I'd traded lust and the love of gore, for the boredom of church, and for me, organized religion still seems like so much malarkey, with a bit of wisdom and history stirred-in. Up until I started going to the Plaza de Toros, I attended church every Sunday, because my Mom insisted, and because I sometimes played the organ for the congregation, and always on Easter and Christmas. Generally, church hymns and Christmas music are a snap to play. The church members were usually nice enough (Although now as an adult, I've frequently found many of them to be less than honest in their business dealings.), but the sermons seemed like a blend of righteousness, common sense, wishful thinking, fairytales, and too often, they were mind-numbing. So I couldn't stand it, and desperately wanted to be free of the holy place. Listening to the minister, I tended to agree with all the stuff about

how to conduct your life, but not so much with the things dealing with supernatural stuff: heaven, hell, God, devil, angels, spirits, souls, miracle healings, etc. As a child, all the God stuff seemed like a cross between Santa Claus and something to stave-off people's obvious fear of that unavoidable thing, called death. People's fear of death runs from one end of the the spectrum to the other; some actually come to welcome the inevitable, almost like they're going to sleep after a backbreaking day's work, whereas others scream in terror, and cry over the approaching inevitable. Most likely, I run to the right of center, closer to the folks, who crap their pants. When it comes to dealing with a prolonged death, I believe that most women are typically tougher, and more courageous, than most men, whereas men are better with things like death by sudden events: combat, car wrecks, skydiving, motocross, etc. This is not to say that when it comes to suffering and death both sexes don't run the spectrum, but it is to say there are notable general differences.

I hated sitting, for the long hour, on the hard wooden organ bench, making me well aware of my boney ischial tuberosities seemingly trying to bore a hole through each side my skinny butt. I also hated

the sticky hair gel irritating my scalp, and the respective old suit and tie, topped off by the inflexible hard soled shoes. But I supposed the worst aspect of the torturous hour was having to listen to the long winded sermons, especially for a hyperactive kid. Getting ready for, going to, and disrobing from the unnecessary event destroyed at least half my day. The way I looked at it, you didn't need a lecture to know the things the pastor talked about, ergo at age eleven, I begged Dad to talk to Mom about liberating me from the madding weekly visit to church. It was an easy argument to make to Dad, since he never attended church, except for when he was married. For once, and so Dad took my side and cast off my religious shackles, freeing me from the agony of mandatory weekly church attendance. *God bless you, Dad.* Of course, Mom became furious with Dad for rescuing me from the unnecessary misery of church, but she quickly got over it. The *Little General* was losing control; it had been ebbing, since the day I'd put the grass snake down her dress.

"Alright honey (Dad), if you support your son not going to church, his eternal damnation is on your hands. He may well burn forever, because of you…

burn forever! Do you understand that…. Fooooreveeeer?" Mom screamed, leaning forward, repeatedly stamping her right foot, with her little fisted balled-up and pressed against her hips. *Thank you, Dad!*

For some unknown reason, I've usually found an angry woman to be somewhat cute. This is not to say that their anger should not be respected, but anger in a female often makes me smile, and Mom looked so cute that day, she was screaming about my damnation. Not having to attend church made my life a lot less frustrating. It also made it easier to get in trouble, but what's life without a little trouble?

"Okay sweetie, if he goes to hell, it's my fault." Dad calmly agreed, not believing in heaven or hell.

"Thanks, Dad. Church is just too weird for me. Do you believe all that stuff, Dad? I mean, doesn't it seem a bit weird to you? Its sort of like believing in the, Easter bunny, the tooth fairy, and Santa Claus, with a lot of good advice thrown in, so that you'll believe in all the holy parts."

"Be nice to your Mom, son. You don't want to mess with someone's religious beliefs… if it keeps them happy, you have to be polite, and don't be

saying anything about their religion being like Santa Claus. Everyone has their needs. If anybody asks you what you believe in, just say that you're an agnostic; that'll keep you off the hook, and not cause you too much grief! Being an agnostic means that you're not sure what you believe in, and believe you me, no one knows what happens after you die, or where the universe came from, or if there is a God. No one is that smart, no matter how sure they are, they just don't know. Buddhists all know that Buddhism is the way… Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, all are absolutely certain their way is the only way. That sort of tells you something right there, Joey. I suppose you see that."

"Yeah. And, no since in making people mad at me… so I'll be an agnostic. Thanks." I agreed. *So, this is what Dad thinks.*

Oddly enough, in 1927, it was a Belgian Catholic priest, a Father Georges Lemaitre, who created the Big Bang theory, proposing an expanding model of the Universe, to explain the redshifts of spiral nebulae. Correspondingly, the man developed the Friedmann equations for describing an expanding universe (However, with more modern discoveries those equations may no longer be creditable). But

even the Big Bang doesn't explain where it (the matter comprising the universe) all came from. Moreover, nobody has a clue about how many times it (everything) has banged before, or will bang again into the future. Still, I'm not totally convinced that the universe will contract again; but just continue to expand for infinity. Of course the concept of future and past may only exist in the mind (memories) of humans, or whatever other 'intelligent life' might be out there in the seemingly limitless void. These were questions that had begun to trouble me, around the time I started going to the bullfights, and would kick-in big time, when I began withdrawals. They made me feel insignificant and my life too brief.

Riding the crowded Spanish passenger bus to the bullfights was exciting, especially if there were gypsy kids on board. I loved to watch them work a crowd. The Spanish kids, who were roughly my age, or a little older, were generally polite children, but the gypsy kids were often up for some measure of trouble, and that usually meant stealing. Most of the ones I saw in Southern Spain were completely untrustworthy. You had to watch your jewelry and your wallet, around them. By-in-large, they tended to be master thieves and minor con-artists, and they

were openly proud of it. Pride about their skills of pilferage and trickery seemed to be a cultural thing, which I clearly understood, since I was similarly proud of my ability to lie, but my lies weren't designed to be pernicious; they were mostly intended to free me up from parental restrictions and discipline. After I told them that I was an excellent liar, they made eminently clear to me, that they considered larceny an art, to be cultivated and admired. They also seemed to enjoy the reaction their theft engendered, more than the booty they stole.

The robb'd that smiles, steals something from the thief; He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.
Othello by William Shakespeare

They seemed to firmly believe that stealing was a noble pursuance, and thought nothing about bragging about their more clever and lucrative thefts, especially those gleaned from churches and the clergy. Oddly enough, stealing from the church seemed like a good thing to me, as well. Many of the Spanish refused to ride the bus, if the gypsy kids were onboard. Sometimes, because of the gypsies,

the riders would get-off the bus, swearing various unkind oaths. If you didn't have anything on you of worth, there was no problem getting on the bus with the gypsy kids.

Most of the young male gypsies stole things like: gold and silver crucifixes, food, drink, jewelry, cash, bicycles, wristwatches, church relics (Almost, every cathedral had poorly guarded relics.), pocketbooks, and wallets; basically, anything of value, which wasn't nailed down, or wasn't too heavy. I think that most of the Spanish gypsies were Catholics, but they didn't go to church too often, and they followed the sub-cult called, Our Lady of El Rocio. Please believe me when I tell you, that this thing about the gypsy kids stealing is not a cultural bias on my part, but merely a series of observations, but I'm only one observer. On-the-other-hand, I saw no evidence that the rumors, concerning gypsy women being the loose and seductive, were true. In fact, those gypsy females, which I saw, tended to dress more conservatively than most of the Spanish women. Moreover, the young gypsy girls seemed to be more polite and virginal.

Throughout history, there have been many cultures, where crime was something to be admired.

Thuggees is a Sanskrit word, which means concealment. The Thuggees were an organized gang of assassins, and have been described as the world's first mafia, who operated from the 1200s to the 1800s in India. Members of that religious group, were known for their ritualistic assassinations, done in the name of the Hindu Goddess Kali. Thuggees later came to be referred to as Thugs, a word which has been passed-on into English, during Britain's ruthless occupation of India. The word has now morphed into a descriptor for gangsters of various kinds.

Frankly, I rather admired those dishonest kids, for they were true survivors, in a tremendously poor country. Frequently, those clever boys would work the crowds, waiting to go into the bullfights: pick-pocketing, snatching pocketbooks, wallets, etc., and then running. Often, one boy would set-up a distraction, while another would reach into: a pocket, a pocketbook, an open car window, behind a store counter, a cash register, etc. Occasionally, the kids would sell fake jewelry, trying to pass it off as being made of gold and precious jewels. They also would try to sell 'holy' items, things supposedly blessed by Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, or some

ancient pope. Most people didn't fall for that, but too often the very old Spanish women, who tended to be superstitious and gullible, did.

Another ploy the kids used to bait potential buyers, was to tell them that they'd stolen the fake jewelry from some rich person's home. The confession of theft was especially believable, since the Gypsy kids were famous for stealing. Since everyone knew that a very large portion of the gypsy kids did steal, they'd usually fall for the ruse; then later, the buyer might discover that the item was made out of pot metal and glass. The Andalusians called the gypsies, 'gitanos,' and claimed that they'd first entered southern Spain via Gibraltar, originally migrating west across northern Africa, having come from Egypt. Others believed that the gypsies came from the Indian subcontinent. To the best of my knowledge, the gypsies never claimed to have a land of origin, no ancient homeland, that they called their own, at least none that I've heard of, but they seemed to prize freedom above all else, and a freedom not attached to any particular piece of land. Where the rest of the world's people, as well as certain lower life forms, feel the need to lay claim to actual territory, most gypsies don't. If this is true, it

seems to imply that they have a markedly different aspect to their behavioral neurobiology; and that in this respect, they may be more advanced.

Gypsies spoke a strange language, called ‘Calo,’ which sounded like it was about ninety percent Spanish, but resonated with what seemed like harshness or even anger. Perhaps, the other ten percent was derived from some ancient form of Arabic, or Berber. The Spanish people said that they hated the gypsies, because they stole, but it may also have had something to do with the fact that the gypsies were not bound to any land, nor were they loyal to any recognized government.

Once, I went to the fair (La Feria) in Seville, and climbed on the Ferris wheel, along with several gypsy boys. They only wore shorts, no shirts, and no shoes. That particular Ferris wheel was a bit different, than those normally seen at the fairs, in the United States. Instead of a series of seats, evenly distributed around the circumference of the wheel, there were small houses, like tiny colorfully painted wooden sheds, with sharply pitched roofs. In fact, these little structures looked much like backyard storage sheds.

Each little brightly colored house had only one

small open door frame to enter and exit by, but without a protective door, not even a chain stretched across the entrance to keep the occupants from falling out. Civil suits in Spain were unheard of, then. Safety wasn't such a big deal, back then, either. Once inside the shack, there were two short benches against the left and right opposing walls. I got in one of the sheds with three gypsy boys, all about my age. For a moment during the ride, we were stopped at the very apex of the wheel, about sixty or seventy feet above the ground. The three gypsy kids used that opportunity to take turns urinating out the doorway, and onto the crowd, below. When the crowd figured-out they were being pissed-on, they went supersonic, becoming something more than slightly angry. The multitude began screaming various oaths. *What's gonna happen when we have to get off the ride, into the middle of that pissed-off crowd?* When I got off the ride, everyone in the crowd wrongly assumed I was also guilty of peeing on them, so I had to run for my life, as did the gypsy kids. We ran laughing and weaving through the furious horde, with fists reigning down on our backs. Whenever a gypsy was nearby, I always kept a close eye, on my money, yet they never attempted to rob me; perhaps because I'd confided in them, that I was proud of my lying.

Maybe, it was sort of like how combat vets confide in each other, or drug addicts only trust other addicts.

They carried knives, as did I. They used the knife, or sometimes a razor, to cut the straps on ladies pocketbooks, or to slice open the bottom of a man's back pocket, so his wallet could slip out, or to discourage or slightly injure a pursuer, facilitating their escape. Often just the appearance of a knife is enough to discourage. While those kids stood in stark contrast to the honesty of my Dad, yet I still admire their tenacity.

At the bullfights, my eyes beheld spellbinding scenes. Bulls killed horses and gored a couple of matadors. One was gored deeply in his side, the other was slightly gored in his calf. Every bull which entered the ring was killed, usually by the sword. Many of the bulls were extremely hard to kill, and took considerable abuse, before finally dying. Some would be down on their bellies, with several swords sticking out of them, and blood pouring from their mouth, yet they still refused to die. In such situations, a man with a ten inch spike in one hand and a hammer in the other would be called-in to finish the job. The spike was placed on the bull's forehead and forcefully struck, with the hammer.

This same execution method was used by various Roman, Greek, and Macedonian generals to give their fatally wounded soldiers a swift and merciful death.

During the bullfights, there were moments of tremendous skill and undeniable courage. There were also a few unique unexpected occurrences. Sometimes, the bull's horns would only create a small shallow puncture, less than an inch deep, sometimes the horns plunged deep and the matador would be tossed about like a rag doll, with buckets of blood pouring from the wounds, yet I never saw a matador killed. Now as an old man, I think of such things as inhumane, but then as a blithe child, I craved the carnage. The love of gore did not start to change, until my child was born, around age forty-four. For the more sensitive readers, I have principally chosen to describe a few brief bloody stories, but to spare the readers' sensitivities, I've primarily focused on one unusual fairly semi-violent event, recounting the fervent courage of a small boy.

People, who view themselves as heroes, serve as comic relief.

Taking One's Self Too Seriously, by R.

On the few weekends, when I missed the bullfights, I'd dream about them, but they were never nightmares, just violent bloody scenes of delight. In my dreams, I was never the bullfighter, but I could view the fight from close-up, as if I was standing in, or floating above, the ring. Most likely, the other people, who attended the fights, were like me… connoisseurs of violence, aficionados of the bloodbath. Unlike my Mom, most of the women in the stands would be smiling during some of the bloodier aspects of the bullfight. Moreover, if the matador or the bull appeared to lack courage, so the fight slowed down, the crowd would begin to whistle, which was the Spanish equivalent of booing. The crowd loved the violent bloody action.

http://search.yahoo.com/search?ei=utf-8&fr=aaplw&p=gored+matador+video

The Spanish fighting bulls are bred for speed, agility, strength, and very much for their killing instinct. The type of bull called, the Toro de Lidia,

has been bred for the ring, for hundreds of years. At some time in ancient history, even the wild aurochs bulls were used in the Roman colosseums, and so some of their DNA may likely have found its way into the Lidia fighting bulls. In the 1700s, the bull breeders traveled around, visiting cattle ranches, looking for those bulls, who consistently fought with, and often killed, other bulls. For obvious reasons, the ranchers wanted to get rid of those bulls, and so originally they could be purchased cheaply. As time passed, this method of breeding bulls produced several lineages of highly aggressive fighting bull: Miura, Casta Navarra, Cabrera, Gallardo, etc. Bull breeders all have their own pet theories, about these breeds and how to cross breed these species for maximum size, speed, agility, and aggression. A few years back (2010), a team of Spanish scientists cloned a fighting bull. The resultant calf may be the only representative of a particular fighting lineage, which extends back roughly 300 years. The calf was named 'Got,' and he now lives in a northern village near Camino de Santiago. Needless to say, Spain takes its' bull breeding seriously.

Each of the afternoon's six fights were divided

into three parts: the trecio de varas, the trecio de banderillas, and the bull is then killed in the trecio de muerte. The blowing of a bugle announces the beginning of the fight. The massively muscular animal comes charging into the arena, the banderilleros thrust-out their pink and yellow capes, so that the matador can better judge: how the bull charges, how it lifts its horns, how widely it sways its head from side to side, how quickly it turns and pivots, which part of the ring the bull is most comfortable in, how fast the animal accelerates, how far it has passed the cape, before it wheels around, the bull's attention span, its' reaction time, its' level of aggressiveness, its' level of stamina, etc. The matador also participates in this first phase, using his very large yellow and pink cape, to firsthand access the movements of the bull, and of course to impress and thrill the crowd.

Then two picadors come into the ring, riding heavily padded horses with blinders, to keep them from seeing the charging bull. The first bullfight I attended, the black powerful monster, instantly targeted a picador on horseback, charging straight at the horse and rider. The acceleration and shear mass of the massive bull made it clear that the force of

impact was going to be tremendous.

Normally, as the bull quickly closed the distance, the picador would extend his long spear-like lance, carried under his right arm and against his side. It sort of reminded me of a medieval knight carrying a jousting-lance. The spearhead has a round disk, acting as a depth guard, so that the point could only stab into the posterior portion of the bull's neck to a depth of about three inches. The target area at the base of the bull's lower neck is called *el morrillo*. Ostensibly, this stabbing trauma to the animal's neck muscles was inflicted to reduce the number of matadors being killed in the ring. More than 530 professional bullfighters have been killed, since 1700. The picador's work is critical, since that stabbing of base of the bull's neck, keeps the animal from widely flailing its horns and thereby goring the matador. How many times the picador stabs the bull is ordered by the matador, usually it's no more than two or three times.

During the first fight I ever witnessed, the picador missed his mark. The lance bounced off the bull's back, leaving a deep six inch long gash, while the head and horns of the bull plowed into the paddled ribcage of the horse. The hit was so

powerful, it knocked the wind out of the horse, and equine went down to its knees, thereby putting the picador in imminent danger. Fortunately, the other picador, on the opposite side of the ring, began to shout at the bull, and so the bull redirected its' attention away from the downed horse and rider, and this allowed time for the shocked horse to get back to its' feet.

http://fiskeharrison.wordpress.com/tag/bullfighters-who-have-died-in-bullfights/

The fans informed me that prior to the introduction of the picadors, too many matadors were being killed. Bullfights were popular even in ancient Rome, but it was in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), where these events were refined, into the art form of today. The Moors from North Africa overran Andalusia in 711 AD, and changed bullfighting from the more brutish, formless spectacle conducted by the Visigoths, to a more ritualistic affair, where the conquering Moors, on trained horses, challenged and killed the bulls, with long-bladed spears. Though not as common, this type of fight (killing the bull from horseback) still

continues. I watched a few of these performances, and the horse that is used for this is nothing like the slothful horses used by the picadors. These nimble horses face the bull unpadded, fully unprotected from the bull's deadly horns, therefore they (horse and rider) must be extremely agile to move in on, and dodge around the threatening horns of a charging bull, and to do so in such a way as to allow the rider to sink a short thick spear deep into the bulls back, just behind the morrillo. The rider would maneuver his horse so as to avoid the horns, yet so that he could hold-out his arm, above the bull, with the spear pointing straight down. Once the spear had passed the bull's neck, and was over the bull's upper back, the spear was forcefully plunged downward, so that it's eighteen inch blade completely disappeared into the bull's flesh, along with some of the spear shaft. That downward stabbing was intended to pierce the bull's heart, and when it did, the bull dropped like a rock. Such highly trained horses were extremely expensive, and the matadors on horseback were amazing riders.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47SHPAe0s0k

The picador, on the slow padded horse, generally positioned his unfortunate animal such that its' unprotected side was next to the arena fence. As mentioned, the opposite side of the horse, which was exposed to the bull, was heavily padded to absorb some of the impact, and to hopefully protect the horse from the penetration of the sharp horns. That first day of my seeing a bullfight, as the poor horse was getting back to its feet, the bull charged the second picador. Unfortunately, for the second horse, there remained a few inches of space between the ground and the bottom edge of the heavy thick padding. As mentioned, the picadors' horses wore blinders, so they didn't freakout over the charging bull; ergo the horse just stood there. Racing across the ring, the massive black beast lowered its deadly horns, with its nose nearly skimming the dirt. After the first charge, the bull seemed to realize that the padding on the side of the horse was to be avoided, and the bull slowed slightly, to better duck its' horns under the bottom edge of the heavy canvas covered wadding. Once the tips of its' horns had passed under the protection, the powerful bull thrusted upwards, sinking those thick twin harpoons, deep into the soft underbelly of the horse.

The impaled animal literally screamed. Prior to that day, I didn't know that a horse could make a sound like that. With its horns deep in the horse, the bull then easily lifted both horse and its rider, high off the ground, as if he was putting them on display for the crowd. At first, the mortally wounded horse froze, then its' hooves began helplessly free-wheeling in the air, its right fore-hoof, ineffectually striking the side of the bull's massive neck. The picador was holding on to his saddle, doing his best not to fall off, nor to drop his lance. The bull then literally hoisted them over into the front row of spectators, who had luckily scattered out of their way. Once the mortally wounded horse and rider were over the fence, the bull turned around, as if to see what was behind him, and that's when I saw that his entire head and most of his massive neck were completely covered in thick red horse blood. The crimson horned bull looked like the devil himself. Something about that image strangely attracted me.The dead horse laid motionless on its side, while the picador was yelling and struggling to free his pinned leg from beneath the horse. Some of the male spectators moved-in to help pull the horse's body up off the picador's trapped leg.

Wow! Psychologically, I was hooked. How I loved the violence, and clearly so did the crowd, except for my Mom. Dad looked indifferent. It was obvious that the spectators were pumping adrenaline. Why else would someone attend such an event? The attendees were there for the blood lust. And yes, I'm sorry to say, I felt the same satisfying surge of the socially unacceptable desire. *These people and I are the opposite of Mom.* The bull's power was more than evident. The life of the horse, and the injury to the picador, seemed insignificant, compared to the thrill it generated. My own enjoyment over the grisly episode made me realize something about myself. Today, such a crowd would now probably be considered psychopathic. If that's true, then that day I realized there was a bit of the psychopath in me, even though, I didn't yet know the word. Possibly, there's a little of the beast in everyone, and if you nurture it early, before there's a lot of societal programming, it may blossom; and perchance, this is what nature intended. But, whatever the reason, the crowd and I were devoted to the gore, and wanted more; all the while, my poor Mom was literally shaking, looking down, and refusing to watch. Dad just sat there, without showing the slightest emotion.

Though I enjoyed that spectacle, a few months later, I'd watch a kid shoot a farmer's horse, and I felt a bit sorry for the tired old work animal. The shooting of the horse produced a slight, but memorable, amount empathy, and so, I suppose I wasn't a total psychopath. Youthful contemplation indicated that both incidents, the bullring and the shooting of a farmer's horse, had near limitless possibilities, one enjoying the dark side, the other expressing a bit of pity. Later, I revisited those memories and came to the realization that enjoying violent injury and death, while indeed evil, might better allow a person to do certain disagreeable things, things that a sensitive person might fail to do. That cruel dark part of the brain is like the merciless guard dog, that you can let out the back door at night, if you've heard something nosing around your house. While inside the house, that same canine may lovingly sleep by your bed.

As stated, this had been my first trip to a bullfight, and the very first thing I witnessed was the immediate death of the horse and injury to its rider. As mentioned, the picador had been penned between the concrete seats and the dead horse, with most likely a broken leg. It took quite a number of men to

lift the dead horse. Soon there after, Mom became hysterical and Dad was trying to calm her down. She was plainly pale, then she started talking to Dad, repeating the same phrases over and over.

"Honey, I can't take this. I can't take this. I can't take this. We need to go. We just need to go, now. This is too barbaric! Oh my, Lord! We need to leave. I don't understand why anyone would want to watch this. I can't believe people enjoy this. *Mom really hates this!* I can't take anymore. We need to go! Oh, that poor horse! I think I'm gonna be sick! We need to go! I can't take this…"

Though they slowed-down, those phrases continued to slip past Mom's lips the rest of the afternoon. She turned her face away from the ring and refused to watch. Dad slid-up against her, put his arm around her, and gently tapped her shoulder. Mom seemed to be in shock. For all six fights that day, Mom just looked away, or down at her feet. I prayed that we didn't leave. Dad acted as if the violence was nothing, just a dispassionate thing. Dad couldn't leave because of diplomat appearances.

"I don't think it would be polite to leave, so soon, dear. You don't have to watch, if you don't want to, but we certainly don't want to appear to be

judgmental, by getting-up and leaving. Just don't watch it, if it's too much for you. I have got to consider how it would politically affect my position with the Spanish authorities on the base. The Spanish commandant and his wife are sitting right over there, and they've likely seen us. It would be considered rude, if we just got-up and left." Dad said this, while elevating his chin, and politely smiling at the ranking Spanish naval officer, about a third of the way around the stadium. Dad was number two on the base, the executive officer, and so well known. He was also number one for naval intelligence in Europe. The nearby smiling Spanish commandant clearly loved the action. It wouldn't have been politically correct for us to have gotten-up and walked-out on Spain's favorite spectator sport. In fact, bullfighting was bigger than soccer, then.

In order, to continue to attend the bullfights, every weekend, I took to regularly climbing over the base perimeter fence, and coming-up with excuses as to what I'd been doing. Generally, when I'd go to a Sunday afternoon corrida, there were six bulls and three matadors. Each matador fought twice, and barring the death or injury of the matador, each fight lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes, invariably

culminating with the demise of the bull.

Most of the Andalusians (people of southern Spain) were far bigger fans of bullfighting, than Americans were fans of the *NFL*. In addition, the Spanish people were more passionate in most ways, not just in bullfighting, but in love for their friends and family, or even in the enjoyment of everyday conversation… just a matter of different passionate little pieces of gray matter. Now days, bullfighting is losing popularity and may one day be banned. In some aspects, the sport has evolved, in that it has become less violent. The horses no longer die, gutted in the ring. The pro-bullfighting populace is outraged by the criticism of the sport. Throughout history, various political figures, disliked the violent sport. The Spanish King, Carlos III, tried to ban bullfighting back in 1771. Carlos IV did, as well. However, in an act of populism, King Joseph I Bonaparte (1768 to 1844) , celebrated his coronation, with a bullfight. He'd been a French lawyer, and was the older brother of Napoleon, who made him first King of Naples and Sicily, and then later (1808) King of Spain. Bread and public circus was a societal formula, which had worked well for the Romans, and even the period of Enlightenment couldn't get rid of

it… couldn't rid the human brain of its' more aggressive wrinkles.

Back in the late 50s and early 60s, there was a renowned bullfighter of unparalleled ability. His name was Luis Miguel Dominguin. People revered him the world over, especially the women. It was during one of his bullfights, that an unexpected event transpired, which I've chosen to relate, herein. Where Rocky Marciano (then, the only boxer, who won every fight he fought, and knocked-out over eighty-five percent of his opponents) was my first, Dominguin was my second real sports hero. Unlike most fighters, Marciano never seemed to be fazed when being hit, and he never appeared to run out of steam. His punch was like a sledgehammer. Rocky had been the heavyweight boxing champion, for many years, when I was a young child, and Dad and I had religiously watched Marciano's fights on the black and white television.

But unlike Marciano, who'd I'd only seen on the TV, I got to watch Dominguin up close and in person, on several occasions. The matador was featured in Ernest Hemingway's book, *The Dangerous Summer*, posthumously published in 1985. The novel was actually written in 1959 and 1960, when I was there

in Spain, and describes the rivalry between Dominguin and his brother-in-law, Antonio Ordonez, both great bullfighters. As a child, I watched them both, several times, and for my money, Dominguin was the best.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZ_B2wYhOrk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr7pWR3zVRc

Hemingway and I apparently shared a love for bullfighting; if only I could have shared a smidgeon of his talent for writing. El matador, loosely translated, means ‘the killer.’ A matador is also referred to as a ‘torero.’ Regardless of how you feel about the morality/immorality of bullfighting, by and large, those guys were quite courageous, and therein lies the kernel of fascination with the violent art form. Even when injured, they could still display their mettle. At times, I’d be sitting down by the arena’s fence, right next to Dominguin and his attendants, as he carefully plied his trade, and could hear them talking, about some beautiful woman,

sitting somewhere up in the concrete stands, or about the bull. I'd be riveted to Dominguin's every facial expression, as well as to the intricacies of the fight. A man of great bravery is indeed a wonder to behold. My Father was such a rare man, but Dad's bravery wasn't for showmanship, but judiciously applied to help assure the survival of the free world, and to save himself, and the lives of his comrades. In the history of the world, my Dad's role is probably relatively minor, yet far greater than most.

The bravery of a bullfighter, though only for show, is bravery nonetheless, and intensely entertaining. Often soldiers will unknowingly, or sometimes knowingly, fight in an unjust war, but that doesn't make them less courageous. Dominguin was tall and slim, regal in appearance, and was one of the best two fighters, ever to perform in the Corrida de Toros. He frequently smiled, but when he didn't, he looked like a truly dangerous man. Some say that Manuel Laureano Rodriguez Sanchez Manolete was the best bullfighter ever. Manolete died in the ring, the year before I was born. He died after being gored in the upper right thigh. The horn probably punctured the femoral artery. That fatal day, Manolete had appeared alongside Luis Miguel

Dominguin, who was then just a beginner, but with the death of Manolete, Dominguin's career accelerated. Some felt that that fatal day Manolete's soul/talent entered the body of Dominguin. The below black and white video is only a series of still photos, and a bit corny, though not too well done, but it makes a few critical points, about the men and the sport.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69bxX--w7n8

For me, Dominguin was like magic in motion. In a way, his actions in the ring where like watching a carefully crafted movie, about what a bullfighter should be. Often, it seemed that he could read the bull's ebb and flow of conviction. Several times, I'd be shocked to witness him drop to his knees with his back just six to ten feet from a bull, with a deep desire to kill and maim, yet somehow, Dominguin knew the animal wouldn't charge; at least, for the next few seconds.

Nonetheless, as if immersed in some dreamlike trance, the beast would only intensely stare at the

unguarded spine of the kneeling matador. Death would stare the killer in the back, and for a few brief moments, it was as if they were suspended in time. The Spanish firmly believed that the greater the danger the greater the honor, and Dominguin never disappointed the crowd.

At the end of every bullfight, the matador's performance is graded. If at least half of people, sitting in the stands, waved their handkerchiefs, the presidente of the corrida was automatically obliged to award the matador one of the death bull's ears. However, if he felt the matador had done better yet, and more handkerchiefs were being waved, the presidente would grant the higher award of two ears, and if the presidente believed the matador's performance was truly outstanding, then two ears and a tail were awarded. If the matador received at least two ears, he'd be carried around the ring on the shoulders of his attendants.

In my childhood, I came to exalt both those types of killer, the bulls and the matadors. My Dad too killed a lot of folks in the war, and I worshiped him, as well, and still do. Today, for a child to worship killers and killing is considered to be pathological. But then and there, it was the norm for the many

Spanish folks, who loved the bullfights. Bullfighting was a dance of death, either the bull died or the matador, with very few, if any, exceptions. Even if the matador is gored and unable to finish the fight, another matador will takeover and kill the bull, or the bull will be lured to the pens and killed there. I never saw the latter. Regardless, there was always blood and death in those afternoons.

However, I was once told that if a bull displays exceptional courage and uncanny fighting ability, he might be allowed to live, though I never witnessed that event, either. When it did happen, the spectators would shout and request an 'indulto,' or pardon for the bull, from the attending presidente, sitting and watching high in the stands. If this happened, the matador would look to the presidente for further guidance. If the presidente stands, the matador was to kill the bull, but if the president hung an orange handkerchief from his balcony in the stadium, the bull was spared, and freed to make baby bulls. The idea being that the best bull DNA would then be pasted on, to better maintain the deadly fights.

When a matador begins the fight, he enters the ring without a sword, and uses a large cape, pink on one side and yellow on the other. Using that cape, his

courage, his observations of the bull, his intuition, his experience, and his quickness, he displays his skill at passing and dancing with the bull. After about ten minutes of such, the matador leaves the ring, then trades the pink and yellow cape for his red cape and sword, then he returns to the ring and begins the second dance, the dance of death. This is the aforementioned *trecio de muerte;* where he finishes by driving his sword down through the bulls back (between the animal's shoulder blades and just to one side of its backbone). Hopefully, the flexible and slightly curved blade, plunges downward, to pierce the animal's massive heart, for a quick kill, which only happened about half the time. The other half of the time, something would go wrong, and so the kill would become prolonged and messy, i.e.,: the sword would go through a lung, or would only penetrate to a short non-lethal depth, or the sword would bounce off a bone, or the sword would go in all the way to the hilt, but just doesn't seem to affect the bull, apparently not hitting a vital organ. Sometimes several swords would end-up being stuck in the poor bull, yet he'd still be on his feet, wobbling, and moving… still trying to fight. That pitiful situation would create a lot of loud whistling and frustration in the crowd, with the males in the crowd seeming to

be angry, and the women typically feeling sorry for the suffering bull.

At one fight I saw as a child, just as the matador thrust forward with the sword, the bull flung its head up. The horns knocked the sword free from the matador's grasp. The long blade soared straight-up in the air, slowly rotating end over end. The matador appeared uncertain of where the sword had gone, looking from side to side. The blade came straight down point first, plunged in the muscular tissue, between the matador's neck and left shoulder! The steel passed down through his body, and about six inches of the distal end of the blade protruded from the lumbar curve of his lower back, a few inches above his waist, ergo about two and half feet of steel remained inside the matador's ribcage.

The injured matador briefly staggered, then steadied himself, and then shocked everyone in the crowd. The attendant's had sprinted out into the ring to help the wounded matador, but the brave man waved them back, while the bull seemed to be debating whether or not to charge. Without the slightest hesitation, the matador reached-up with his right hand, grasped the red handle of the sword just to the left side of his neck, and pulled out the long

bloody blade, then confronting the bull, he thrust home the lethal steel into the back of the bull and down through its' giant heart. Instantly, the bull dropped to its knees, then a second later, died. The matador collapsed, and was carried from the ring by his attendants. The crowd roared forth their pleasure, while I too was on my feet screaming my approval, "Ole!" Fortunately, the matador somehow lived. There was no way that the matador could have rehearsed and prepared for such a freakish scenario. The matadors, I saw, were inherently tough and brave men; quite likely, it's hardwired in their genes, long before their conception… a sperm or egg thing; much as is the aggression of the bulls. But, I need to be getting back to my one non-gory story about the brave child, and so far, I have been relating more gore, than I first intended, which not only speaks ill of my writing skills, but probably my personality, as well.

The story about the child began late one afternoon, and the great Dominguin was about to kill the sixth bull, last bull of the day's corrida. Having already done the dance with the pink and yellow cape, Dominguin had momentarily stepped out of the ring to acquire his sword and red cape. The crowd

was over-the-top with anticipation. The bull was massive, extremely aggressive, and a genuine perilous threat… even for the great Dominguin. My feeling was that Dominguin wanted to not waste time, but to kill the creature, as soon as permitted in the last phase of the fight. The bull was clearly a top-of-the-line executioner. The lively heavily muscled ebony beast, radiated power, and the way it hooked its' horns seemed perilously unpredictable.

Back then in Spain, one way, if not the only way, a young male could escape the bone crushing grip of poverty was to become a matador. But out of millions of hopefuls, only a handful ever got that opportunity. Usually, you had to have family or business connections, or know an actual matador to be able to attend the *Royal School of Bullfighting* in Seville.

We know that a peaceful world cannot long exist, one-third rich and two-thirds hungry.

Jimmy Carter

The poor child, I would witness that day, would place his life on the line, so that he and his family might escape poverty, which breeds a venomous

form of desperation. Severe poverty is an acute paralyzing assault. As mentioned, it generally brings out the best in some and the worst in others. That day, I was about to lay witness to a remarkable example of such desperation. Without the necessary contacts or the funds to attend the aforementioned bullfighting school, about the only way to become schooled as a novillero (beginning bullfighter) was to do what the child did. In the 1950s, the vast majority of novilleros, didn't survive the years of training to become full fledged matadors.

When Dominguin momentarily left the ring to retrieve his sword and red cape, from his assistant (*mozo de espada)*, that's when unexpectedly a small ten year old boy, holding a wooden stick, as a mock sword, and a large red rag, for his pseudo cape, nimbly leaped out of the crowd, quickly climbed the arena fence, and landed in the round dirt ring. The child then bravely sprinted to its center. Immediately, I recognized the kid, having seen him before, begging on street corners. He wasn't a pushy type of beggar, but rather the kind that would make one quick plea and move-on, regardless of his success. I never truly knew if a beggar was begging just for himself, or for his family, but it seemed that

the children generally begged for their siblings and their mother. Girl children didn't beg.

When the kid dropped from the fence, into the ring, at that moment, it was only occupied by that highly dangerous bull. Due to the work of the picador and his lance, as well as the barbs of the long colorful banderillas, which were hooked into and bouncing on his massive back, much of the beast's morrillo, right shoulder, and foreleg were covered in a thick layer of red blood; even so, the powerful beast seemed completely unfazed, paying the blood and wounds no mind. In fact, the injuries seemed to inspire the animal to a great level of aggression.

Instantly, the bull studied the small newcomer to the ring. The presents of little brown boy, his red rag, and wooden stick, caused the bull to pivot and directly face him. No doubt, the boy was hoping to impress the world champion, Dominguin, and was willing to die to do so; and indeed, the matador was watching, along with everyone else in the arena. An icy hush fell over the ring. No lips moved, and every eye was riveted to the scene. The fact that a mere child had pick-up the gauntlet had transformed everyone's perspective. All of us realized that the odds were stacked against the child's survival!

Recently, I've heard that children are no longer allowed to view the bullfights, perhaps because of what I'm about to describe, or maybe it's because the world no longer wants children to witness violence, unless its detached from actual reality, as in: a movie, a television program, or some video game.

The Andalusian boy was less than four feet in height, and built like a shaft of weed. Even sitting in the stands, it was easy to count the shirtless frail boy's ribs. All he wore was a pair of old dirty loose fitting brown shorts, and a pair of well-worn leather sandals. The boy's shorts, sandals, skin, and hair were all various shades of dark brown. His dark skin, and his dusty dark straight but matted hair, starkly contrasted with the bright whites of his eyes and teeth, making them appear to flash.

Without the slightest hesitation, the child ran out into the middle of the ring, the bull would momentarily remain near the opposing fence; in effect, the boy had just stolen the day's last, and most dangerous bull, captivating everyone's attention. Unquestionably, the little boy possessed a courageous ancestral heart, which no doubt at that moment was hammering hard, perchance much as Dominguin's had once pounded when he faced his first calf, as a

child. The inexperienced Andalusian boy was attempting to begin with a fully mature and powerful monster of a bull. For a two count, the moreno child stood motionless, in the gaze of the killing machine. Other than the heaving of his chest and ribs, the bull stayed motionless.

The crowd didn't made a sound. I'd heard of people speaking about this sort of thing, but until that moment, I'd only thought it a rumor. After all, what little kid could possibly stand-up to something so enormously fearsome? But, there stood the frail untrained child, and not a single soul in the Plaza de Toros attempted to intervene. *No one is going to save him.* What prevented anyone from stopping what was about to transpire was a primeval societal code, an unspoken solemn cultural rule, concerning manhood. In Andalusia (southern Spain), a male child was considered superior to, and more valuable than any female child, and at some point in his childhood (usually around age eleven), the male child, is considered to be socially superior to his mother! This strange custom still exists in many parts of the world, e.g., certain Muslim countries. Even in modern day China most parents prefer having a male child to a female.That sexually biased perspective may have

been created long ago, and brought to Spain, when the Arabs invaded from north Africa. Obviously, many Muslims have a markedly different position, when it comes to women's rights and the roles of men and women. Certainly, various Muslims will politically pick and choose passages from the scared Quran to tell you otherwise.

The Moors, who were indeed muslim peoples with mixed Arab and Berber (considered the indigenous people of north Africa) blood, invaded Spain around 710 AD, and weren't driven out, until approximately 1491, right before Columbus set sail across the then mysterious Atlantic ocean. Nonetheless, the Moorish DNA and much of their cultural influence are forever a part of Spain, especially southern Spain, as evidenced from the skin color of that child in the bullring that day. The sexual bias toward women is especially evident, since some Arab men were accustomed to having multiple wives, and although the Quran sets forth clear guidelines for such, often 'where there's a will there's a way,' in matters of interpreting religious text, and different muslim sects interpret the Quran quite differently. Oddly enough, each sect knows, with absolute certainly, that their interpretation of the

Quran is the correct one. Though I've heard different accounts, Mohammed had about eleven wives. One of his wives may have been fairly young, when she married him, at age six; nevertheless, Mohammed didn't bed her, until she was nine. Of course, since all this was probably blessed by Allah, it was no doubt a good and Holy thing.

Most likely, because of that nearly eight hundred years of Moorish influence, as well as the sexual inculcating of various DNA nucleotide sequences, a male child, born in southern Spain, had the right to decide when and how he wished to prove his manhood. That was the cultural code. And so that day in the bullring, it was the boy's decision and his alone, and he was not to be constrained or challenged! It's an understatement to say this was a pivotal moment, and not just for him.

Due of that ancient moorish code, when the boy made the treacherous leap into the bullring, everyone present honored his valiant wish. The decision was considered sacred, and not to be questioned, ergo the crowd simply watched, as the boy and the massive black bull, gazed at each other. No one attempted to intervene. We all knew that the boy was inspired by his desire to escape the iron

yoke of brutal penury. Once in the center of the ring, the child spun around once, to gaze at the crowd, then he again faced the unsympathetic bull. For a few seconds, the child and the bull simply gazed at each other, while everyone breathlessly watched. *It's like the bull wants him to run.* During that period, neither the boy, nor the bull, nor anyone in the stands flinched. *This is the calm, before the storm.* Then, the child's skinny little arm, bravely thrust-out the stick with the ratty red cloth draped over it, and he screamed!

"Toro!" *How does such a little voice sound so brave?*

The voice may have been childishly slight, but the inherent valor it possessed was unmistakable… everyone recognized the boy's steely nerve. That child's voice had indeed commanded the bull's attention. We all knew the odds. With his cry, the boy had both humbled everyone present, and summoned the beast. With that single word, I clearly heard his ancient courage, and his desperate cry for a better life. What seemed most remarkable about the cry is that the child had delivered it with a challenging sneer. His one word request didn't need repeating, for the monstrous jet black bull had

clearly heard his name.

Until that call, the bloody beast had just been standing vigilant, near the edge of the ring, but then the brawny executioner charged with blinding speed. The fragile child stood his ground, on brown thighs thinner than their dusty brown knees. It wasn't hard to see that the homemade cape was trembling. As the accelerating black bull lowered his horns and drove-in for the kill, the boy stood ramrod straight, arm and cape extended, then he pivoted perfectly, completing a smooth flawless pass. Everyone, jumped to their feet and roared their approval.

"Oley!"

The electrified crowd thundered, and the old building reverberated with the crowd's approval. All of us were rooting for the child. The matadors and everyone in the crowd were transfixed, awaiting the second pass. No one so much as blinked. The child, emboldened by his first successful pass, again forcefully thrust forth the stick, and homemade cape, arched his thin narrow back, stuck-out his jaw, and shouted the second command.

"Toro!"

And once more, the enormous black killing

machine leaped forward; only this time, as he accelerated, the lethal horns were dangerously swaying from side to side. *This could be his end!* When the bull thudded passed, luckily the horns had swung, so they missed the child, still the animal's burly blood-covered shoulder firmly smashed into the child, knocking him four feet backwards and well off balance, yet miraculously, the blow was not enough to make the boy completely fall or go unconscious; deftly, the little child just touched the ground with his left hand to regain his balance, and he quickly stood upright. But, it was plain that the bull's blow had weakened the boy's resolve.

The boy realized that he'd just had a close brush with death, and his entire face and left side came away smeared with the bull's thick red blood, which had been covering it's shoulder and foreleg. First hand, the child had felt the shear power of the bull, and sensed that death was soon coming. We all saw the change in man-child; his jaw went slack, his eyebrows raised, the whites of his eyes stood-out pleading, against his dark blood-smeared olive skin. The icy crippling grip of fear had flooded in, where hope and courage had burned, only a few seconds ago. That piece of gray matter, known as fear, had

then taken center stage.

The enormous black bull had nimbly spun on a dime, as the kid was still stumbling to stand upright, and was struggling to prepare himself for the third pass. Death started it's charge, and was about to overtake his young target. This time, it was clear, that the boy wasn't able to gather his wits, but instead he panicked, and dropped his wooden stick and red cloth, and turning his back to the charging bull, he sprinted toward the distant fence, but the fence was too far away. There was no hope that he could reach it, before the bull laid claim, and there was absolutely no doubt death was about to take the boy; his fate was firmly sealed. The kid was simply death on the run, still he didn't cry-out. *This is it!* At that moment, the three matadors and the various assistants chose to ignore the aforementioned ancient societal code and sprinted into the ring, but they were too late, and too far away to be of any real help.

The women in the crowd began to scream, their cries splintering the silence. The men shouted oaths. Then time slowed to the point, that the scene seemed to almost shudder, as if it was preparing to stop. It was too much for many of the attendees to look at,

but not for my pitiless soul! I knew what was about to happen, but hadn't the desire to look away.

Watching the death of a seasoned matador or large animal is one thing, but the death of a frail desperately heroic little boy was a terrible thing. The boy's impending execution was tearing at the fabric of the crowd's sanity, a spectacle awash in a type of morbid sickening emotional patina. If the crowd's will power could have stopped the beast, it would have happened, but the beast was not to be denied. The Spanish child would not escape the bull, and so the bull had his way!

The world suddenly narrowed-down to merely a pair of large black pointed horns, and a thin brown-skinned child. At full speed, the powerful gigantic creature hit the child dead in the middle of his small back. The beast then flung the reedy delicate body high into the air. The momentum of the charge carried the bull on by, as if striking the child's body had been of no more significance than a rag-doll. The frail body came down, well behind the bull, partially caught by the running matador. Dominguin then released of the child's body, and headed directly for the horns of the bull. But then, quite unexpectedly, as Dominguin reached the bull, the boy got up from

the ground, and again ran for the fence, but in the opposite direction. Dominguin, without the aid of a cape, interceded to mercifully distract the animal, giving the child, and the attendants adequate time to escape the arena.

The child's narrow brown back had impacted on the wide black face of the fighting bull, but luckily his body was so thin that it fit directly between the deadly sharp horns. When the bull threw its head up, the shaft of each horn, and not their merciless points, had lifted the boy by his arms, and so, with an arm draped over each deadly horn, the boy had been flung skyward. No doubt he'd been badly bruised, yet otherwise unharmed.

As the frail child was grabbed and lifted-up over the fence and out of the bullring, two of the La Guardia de Civil, Franco's federal police, angrily snatched-up the child and began to literally drag him away. *All those police need is the smallest excuse to break bad on someone.* Almost certainly the boy was headed to jail, where he'd probably remain, until his poverty-stricken family could somehow manage to scrap together enough money to pay, what was sure to be, an outlandishly expensive fine, and the odds were good that the cruel Guardia de Civil took a

percentage of the bail. Police records were only paper back then, and they didn't have to write a receipt. La Guardia de Civil could set their own bail, and it was generally not some reasonable amount, commiserate with the crime. In addition, the bail usually increased for Americans. In effect, La Guardia de Civil operated by their own rules. *That poor kid… out of the frying pan, and into the fire.* Everyone in the Plaza de Toros knew of the sadistic natures of the La Guardia de Civil, the personal police of the country's dictator, Francisco Franco. Dominguin had momentarily stepped out of the ring, leaving the bull unattended, but all eyes were following the two La Guardia de Civil dragging-out the little boy.

On the evening of July 17th 1936, the then general Franco started the civil war, and ordered the execution of all the thousands of men in Dad's aforementioned photo book. His goal was to destroy any and all left wing organizations. After the war, Franco ruled Spain with an iron fist and La Guardia de Civil were his brass knuckles.

Almost certainly the poor boy would be facing months in one of the worst jails imaginable. In those days, if you were unlucky enough to get jailed in southern Spain, you had better have family or

friends, who could bring you clean clothes, food, and if needed, medicine. The jail furnished nothing but water, and misery. More than a few prisoners died behind bars. Rumors circulated, that the merciless guards regularly allowed prisoners to starve to death, if there was no one to bring them food. I'd heard rumors that some of the nuns would throw pieces of bread and candy through the barred windows. Also, if you were starving to death in a Spanish jail, it was best not to complain, for a beating would soon follow to painfully hasten your death. Such cruelty could be owing to the possibility that typically the hardest of men had survived the war, to be given positions as La Guardia de Civil.

Several times, my Dad had to visit the Spanish jails, in the nearby cities and towns, to bailout various foolish American naval personnel, who'd usually gotten drunk in some local bar, and managed to get crosswise with the La Guardia de Civil. The guards had no qualms about beating down rowdy drunks. Dad often not only bailed them out, but pressed a little slush-fund money, into the palms of the involved La Guardia. Then, he'd transport them to the base hospital, or the dentist. In addition, Dad had told me that the guards at the jails and prisons

were hired based on their brute strength and cruelty, which some people thought reduced recidivism. Perchance, there was some truth to that. On the other hand, every so often, a member of La Guardia would be found dead, since like certain types of DNA, justice has a way of surviving. Rarely if ever, would the killer get caught. Since so many people hated La Guardia, the list of suspects was too long to investigate.

In those days, the men of La Guardia possessed the unrestrained power of life and death. If they beat a person, or killed someone, they didn't have to supply a reason. They answered to no man. Not only were they autonomous and above the law, but they were the law, and only accountable to the country's dictator, yet I never heard of Franco reprimanding any of his La Guardia. Consequently, most of the citizens remained terrified of them, and avoided them, at least whenever possible. The regular police, nor the judges, could do anything to the brutal men of La Guardia de Civil. If you've been raised in the US, there's a fair chance that you don't realize how savage certain governments can be; especially, those ruled by dictators, with religious zealots as the citizenry.

When the two guards were dragging-away the little boy, the ever intrepid Dominguin, challenged them, and in a way, so did the entire crowd at the bullfighting arena. After all, the little boy had shown remarkable courage, and certainly deserved better than to be thrown in a rat infested Spanish jail. Everyone was shocked that such an exceptional display of childhood bravery was being punished, rather than rewarded; ergo, Dominguin loudly shouted-out at the two guards.

“Espera un momento. Tríelo aqui. Ese niño es mio. No necesita ir a la cárcel.”

“Wait, a moment! Bring him back to me! That boy is mine! He doesn’t need to go to jail!” The matador bellowed at the two deadly men. *Holy shit! I can’t believe he ordered them! Nobody talks to the La Guardia!*

Dominguin hadn’t made the comment as a request, but rather a demand! Clearly, in my mind, the shit was about to hit the fan! No one ever commanded the La Guardia to do anything, much

less to shout at them. The two guards stopped and turned. *Are they going to arrest or shoot Dominguin?* For a long moment, it looked like La Guardia were going to stand down the matador, and a matador was Spain's supreme symbol of courage. All of us in the stands began to whistle and point at the two La Guardia. As mentioned, whistling was the Spanish equivalent of booing or expressing disapproval. Then the crowd took to shouting obscenities at the guards, and hundreds of demands were suddenly being screamed-forth for the two La Guardia to release the brave little boy. As the courage grew in the spectators, the shouts increased in number and volume.

The people began violently shaking their fists, women included, and suddenly the crowd was up on its' feet, shoes loudly shuffling along the concrete walkways, between the rows of seating. They were moving toward the two armed guards, seemingly to cut them off from exiting the Plaza de Toros with the child. Since I usually sat near the exit, all the people, were coming in my direction. The shuffling spectators were united in their anger and sympathy for the boy. Even though the people feared the La Guardia, the boy's bold actions in the ring that day

had fortified them.

The people kept shuffling toward the guards, even though, each of the La Guardia carried a lethal machine-gun, draped over their shoulder. Still, the two guards were vastly outnumbered by the disaffected multitudes, making it appear likely that they would soon be unsoldering those weapons. Whats more, it was well known that many of the Spanish men carried pistols. In those days, no one needed a permit to carry a weapon, ergo it seemed there was a fair chance that more than a few men were about to shoot the La Guardia, from the concealment of the crowd. If the guards attempted to unsling their weapons, it was likely, that those armed in the crowd, would begin shooting, before the guards could cock their machine-guns. A bloody time seemed imminent.

The child's remarkable courage, and possibly Spain's ever-present oppressive poverty, had awakened something rebellious in the Andalusians attending the bullfight that day; the people had plainly reached a tipping point. Besides, while the La Guardia could get away with the occasional killing of one or two people, it was highly unlikely they could get away with the mass slaughter of such a large

crowd, especially if the people were trying to rescue a desperate heroic child, from an undeserved punishment. Even Francisco Franco would be hard pressed to find fault with the people's actions, and no doubt Spain's president was sure to hear of such a mass shooting. *If someone shoots at the La Guardia they're not going to go down, without returning fire!* Francisco Franco was not a man known for mercy. Perchance, such an unjust gunfight could have easily resulted in the disbandment of the entire federal police force. Franco certainly didn't need another civil war, especially when his forces were weakened from war, and the economy of the country was destroyed.

All this flashed through my mind, forcing me to again recall Dad's thick book with the thousands of photos of the bullet-riddled faces, which President Franco had ordered to executed by firing squad. That afternoon, many lives hung in the balance. Raw courage had been displayed by a little boy, a matador, and then by the crowd, standing-up against the tyranny of the two federal guards. Such a situation may one day be in the future of the United States, if not the world, for there are these same forces of mean gray mush at work, only now on a

much greater scale… evil corporations controlling our brave men on the point of the spear, generating wars for profit, still other companies destroying the atmosphere and health of the entire planet, in oh so many ways, and then there's the drug companies only producing non-curative profitable medicines. At some point, the world will react; I just hope said reaction is not too late.

'If the Lord didn't want them sheared, he would not have made them sheep.'

The Calvera Principle, as expressed by Eli Wallach in *The Magnificent Seven*.

That evening in the Plaza de Toros, we were all firmly entrenched behind the intrepid little boy. And of course, somewhere deep inside the minds of the two La Guardia had to be lurking, at least a smidgen, of admiration for the boy's display of bravery. Even the foulest of peoples, admire true grit. Courage has a way of transcending cultural, political, social, and economic issues. The pluck, which the little child had displayed, had been like witnessing a miracle.

In an important and deep-seated way, courage

defines the worth of humanity, since it's probably the only thing that can stop absolute evil, short of an execution or a frontal lobotomy. Seeing that the crowd was not going to allow them an easy exit, the two guards released the blood smeared child, and so once again, Dominguin called out; but this time, it was to the child. The crowd roared its approval. The cheers were not just for the child but for the change-of-mind that the two La Guardia had displayed. The crowd was wearing ear-to-ear smiles, and slowly the two stoic La Guardia broke-down and grinned and nodded their agreement. The kid ran to his savior, the world champion, Dominguin; who then held him aloft, just outside the ring, indicating that he had accepted the child for training as a matador. Of course, the crowd went crazy, and when the shouting and cheering finally died away, the bullfighter reentered the ring to finish-off the last bull, while the two La Guardia took the distraction to gracefully exit the Plaza de Toros.

In those few minutes, the child had shed his childhood, and slipped the shackles of poverty. To do that, the boy only had to place his life on the line, as well as face going to jail. Perhaps, he was ancient Spartacus, reborn in a child's skinny brown body.

Something told me that everyone left the bullring permanently changed, that evening, including myself. As best as I can recall, I think it was the very first time I witnessed an act of such profound bravery in someone so young. It made me feel like something of a coward, for I realized I had no such amount of bravery.

A few weeks later, I would again witness two La Guardia de Civil in action, but with a far more deadly aftermath. Like the encounter at the bullfight, the second encounter would also be forever burned into my brain. More than half a century later, both memories remain lividly clear, but unlike the inspirational recollection of the child in the bullring, the second event resembles a lurid nightmare.

Too much fear may paralyze expressions of goodness, and create a type of cowardliness, which thrives on cruelty. Consequently, it's a rare man, who is both brave and cruel; still, they do exist, since it's all a matter of gray matter. There are no absolutes in human behavior, except for the fact that when the brain's dead, there's no more behavior of any sort. While some of the La Guardia were known for barbaric cruelty, a few of them were also known for acts of genuine courage. Nothing is black or white,

just various shades of gray matter.

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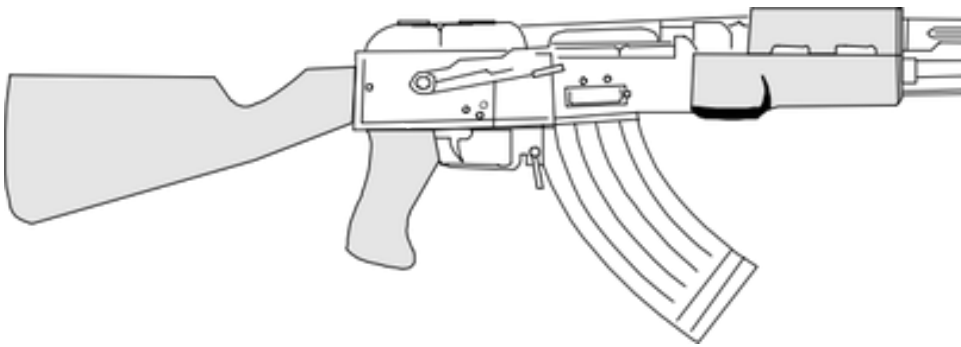


LA GUARDIA DE CIVIL

The sun had not yet quite set. As with most days

in southern Spain, the wind usually dies with the dying of the light; yet that dusky evening, it was still a bit windy, as if the earth wasn't quite ready for slumber. Having left the Sunday bullfights, I was having to walk back to the base. Being a little drunk, I'd missed the last bus. My empty wine skin had held about a quart, and I'd drunk it all, during the six fights that afternoon. Worried my folks were going be angry about my tardiness, I was trying to think of a convincing lie. I was working on inventing a scenario about going to Cadiz to look for coins in the antique stores, and that I'd missed the last ferry boat leaving the city for Puerto, but had luckily enough to catch a ride with some of the sailors, who were driving back to the base.

Headed home, I was walking along a thin dirt path on the weed-covered shoulder of the tiny two lane crumbling asphalt road, when I spied the pair of the notorious Guardia de Civil, dressed in their olive drab uniforms, spit-shined black combat boots, black patent-leather hats, and carrying their usual lethal submachine guns. Generally, the Guardia were large men, and built stronger than the average Spanish male, and while they tended to have lighter complexions, they also frequently possessed darker

natures.

http://life.time.com/history/life-behind-the-picture-w-eugene-smiths-guardia-civil-1950/#1

The next day, when Dad got home from work, at our usual evening meal, he'd tell Mom and me a story, about what happened to two teenage Spanish males, who on a lark, had stolen an American Navy lieutenant's car, a boxy little yellow Opel, but I would already know the story, from having actually bore witness to them being in the car. As a consummate liar, I would simulate shock, as Dad described what happened.

But that prior evening, as I approached the two La Guardia de Civil, I sensed something was askew. There were three factors, which clued me in to the danger. The first clue was that the two guards were strangely positioned on opposite sides of the street, directly across from each other. The second hint was they both looked slightly anxious, and seemed to be hiding. But the third, and most revealing piece of evidence was that their submachine-guns, Star model Z-45s, were in their hands, rather than slung over

their shoulder, as I'd customarily seen them! Never had I actually seen the weapons, off their shoulders, and in their hands, as if they were preparing to use them.

The older of the two guards was on my side of the road, and was slightly hunched-over, with his left shoulder up against the curling flakey multicolored bark of a tall, very thick, eucalyptus tree. The wind caused me to look-up and I saw the thinner branches and pointy tops swaying in the wind, and the leaves were quaking. The huge eucalyptus trees frequently lined many of the roads in southern Spain, having been planted about two hundred years ago. Various ancient countries have used eucalyptus oils for medical purposes. It was used in Indigenous Australian medicine, as an antibacterial and anti-fungal agent; in India's Ayurvedic medicine, it was used to treat respiratory ailments; and, in 17th century England, as a disinfect for hospitals, ergo perhaps the elegant trees had been planted along the roads for medical purposes.

The younger guard, on the other side of the narrow two-lane road, was down on his left knee, with his right side slightly pressed into a dense green leafy bush. He looked to be in his mid-twenties and

sported a pronounced worrisome frown; his black eyebrows were pinched together, and his mouth hung slightly open. The machine gun was clutched in his hands, the muzzle was pointed at the ground. He was breathing too fast, and watching the older guard. *What's going on?* It seemed that the men were expecting something, and were hiding from it, and perhaps they were going to have to defend themselves, against it. La Guardia generally patrolled on foot. I'd never seen them in cars, and I don't think they owned any. Perhaps, they had some old army trucks, but I can't ever recall seeing them in any kind of vehicles. Back then, Spain was probably too poor to afford much in the way of equipment.

Maybe a carload of bank robbers, armed to the teeth, were about to ride by. But soon, I'd realize the guards were concealing themselves, so that the two aforementioned Spanish teenagers in the yellow Opel wouldn't see them, as they came motoring up the road, in the car they'd stolen, just a few minutes prior. But at the time, I had no real idea why the guards were hiding, with their guns at the ready. Next, I recall thinking that this was perhaps some kind of practice exercise, or a strange practical joke, yet in my wildest imagination, I didn't foresee what

was actually about to occur. Right then, from my perspective, it was just a breezy evening, outside of town, and the two guards were behaving oddly.

Wondering what they were up to, I stopped and stood just behind the older guard, and looked-up at his back, I was trying to deduce the nature of what was transpiring. To this day, I've never found out how they knew the car would be coming from that direction, since they had no cellphones, and they didn't carry radios. Perchance, someone had phoned the nearby La Guardia station, that the teens might be taking that particular route out of town, and the guards had run to intercept them. The older guard in front of me, turned and saw me looking, then gave me a return look of irritation, reached back, placed his hand on my chest, and gently shoved me just hard enough, that I lost my balance, and sat down on my butt. Next, he calmly extended his vertical palm, and quietly said, "Shut up and don't move! Just sit there! Not a word! Silence!" It was clear that he wasn't angry with me, but annoyed and trying to make sure I stayed out of his way. *Something serious is happening.* The older guard then spoke to the younger guard across the road.

"You ready? Try to make sure every shot is

precise, Diego. Small bursts are best. Small bursts… three or four shots… Go for the driver, first. If they get passed us, be careful you don't shoot me, or this stupid kid next to me! Understand? Don't shoot us, asshole!" The older guard commanded.

With those comments, I became exceptionally alert, and thought about standing back-up, but didn't want to do that too fast, for risk of further irritating the older guard. Then, I glanced across the little road at the nodding fledgling guard, who looked remarkably uneasy. An odd harmless whirlwind of dust danced a few feet off, to his left. Diego just nodded his affirmation, and studied his weapon. The old man was licking and chewing his lips. By coincidence, the men both drew-back the bolts on the side of their machine guns, chambering a round, and setting the stage for the violence about to come. The older guard was plainly driving these events; violence has its' privileges.

There was only the sound of the wind whistling through the trees, then I heard it, like the distant put-putting sound of a gas-powered lawnmower, except it was the small yellow Opel coming slowly around the curve, about two hundred yards away, and entering that straight stretch, leading directly toward us. I

could see that the two passengers in the front seat, they were dark haired Spanish male teenagers. They were talking excitedly, laughing, and their hands were gesticulating like wild birds. They were probably laughing about the poor frustrated owner of the car, a US navy lieutenant, who'd chased them on foot for a couple of blocks, before giving-up. The older guard very briefly peeked around the tree, spotted the car, pulled his head back behind the tree, then again spoke to the younger guard, "That's them… get ready… just a few seconds… on my signal. Remember, small bursts… don't shoot me!" The younger guard just nodded, and looked like he wanted to be elsewhere.

A moment later, as the tiny yellow car neared, I could make-out that the smiling driver, with both hands firmly gripping the ten and two positions on the steering-wheel, and then the passenger seemed to spot me sitting in the grass just off the road, and gave me a look, as if to say, 'Why are you sitting on this abandoned piece of road?' As I was getting to my feet, it was clear the young men in the car were unaware of the hidden armed guards. *Maybe, the two guards are only going to use the guns to threaten them, and force them to stop.* But I knew that was just

wishful thinking, since I'd heard the older guard's comment about using brief bursts, and going for the driver, first. The passenger briefly blinked while looking at me, then frowned; perhaps, he knew something was wrong, but I did nothing to alert them, other than to give them a forlorn stare, but there was the odd fact that I was standing-up from the ground, when there was no reason that I should have been sitting there, on the deserted roadside. Maybe, the passenger thought I was getting up to ask them for a ride.

The younger guard was then on both feet, but still bent over at the waist, to remain hidden behind the bush. His mouth, which had been hanging open, was now closed. His jaw firmly set, and for a second his nostrils flared. At that instant, I wondered if I should warn the teens, since I pretty well knew death was about to arrive. At that moment, the guards seemed like lions waiting in the high grass for a pair of springbucks, to stroll just a bit closer. Most likely the two La Guardia were judging the distance, listening to the tinny sound of the advancing engine.

All I would have had to do was to shake my head a little, or perhaps draw a fingertip across my throat, or point to one of the guards; had I done so, it might

have given the teens time to stop and surrender, or to turn the car around and escape. Perchance, I could have done that, without the guards seeing me do it, but I failed to do anything, except to watch the teenagers continue their approach. I just watched fate take its course. *I'm nothing like the little boy in the bullring, I'm too afraid of these guards.* Later, I would justify my doing nothing by telling myself that it had all happened too fast, but truth be told, my fear stopped me from warning the teens.

For a few seconds, there was only the sound of the car's engine, the warm wind, and the tremendous tension. The whirling dust devil vanished, and the setting sun, falling on the strategically spaced-out roadside eucalyptus trees had created wide dark diagonal shadows across the roadway. Correspondingly, the little yellow car hypnotically passed through those light and dark areas, causing it to flicker, from a bright yellow to a light gray, making me think of the old silent movies they'd show before the main feature. I'd seen a few of those ancient movies with my Great Aunt Kate, at the Lincoln Theater in downtown Mobile, in the early fifties. I used to wonder how people tolerated silent movies, without any sound; but then, they were the

latest thing, for their day, and probably seemed magical, to the early viewers. Few people can step outside the time and customs they're raised in, just as the old guard remained hell bent on his planned course of action, and was forcing the younger guard to follow.

Prior to seeing the guards, it had only been a warm, relaxing, and somewhat dreamy evening, but the fast developing scenario was like a nightmare, causing me to lose my wine buzz. As the car neared, I just stood stupefied, with the red velvety cord of the wine skin over my shoulder. *The teens have a car and the guards don't, so maybe the old guard is jealous.* As mentioned, President Franco had granted the La Guardia de Civil unlimited authority, even to kill at their own discretion, without fear of consequence.

The La Guardia wore some of the ugliest hats that were ever made, and right then, those weird hats made them appear robotic. Their tricome hats, were much different, than the well-known French tricome hats of the 17th and 18th centuries. The La Guardia's hats were made of a hard shiny black patent leather, and the back of the brim was pushed straight-up into the vertical plane, so that if they backed-up against a wall in a gun fight, their hat

wouldn't be pushed over their eyes. An almost comically thin childlike chin strap, kept the hat from blowing off in the wind. The same type of hat had been worn in ancient Rome by the police, during the time of Leonardo Da Vinci. In those days, it had been designed, so that if an ancient Roman policeman was backed-up against a wall, during a sword fight, the hat wouldn't be pushed over his eyes. But then, with the two La Guardia about to slaughter the teens in the car, the hats made them look immensely menacing.

https://www.eyeonspain.com/blogs/iwonderwhy/11562/Why-do-they-wear-that-hat---Spains-first-police-force.aspx

The little yellow car was only doing about twenty-five miles per hour, and was about thirty yards from the guards, when the older guard just nodded to the younger, and together, they stepped out onto the road, raised their automatic weapons, and leaned slightly forward to counter the weapons' recoil. Surprised by the sudden appearance of the two guards, the two teens suddenly sat bolt upright… mouths wide open. Simultaneously, the guards

squeezed the triggers, while continuing to slowly walk toward the approaching car. The deafening roar of the machine guns, shattered the quietude of the evening, while spitting forth their deathly lead projectiles, and raining empty shiny brass shell casings onto the cracked blacktop. The little yellow Opel was such an easy target, and somehow seemed out classed by the machine-gun fire. Mixed in with the loud booming noise of the weapons, I could also make out the heavy thuds of the bullets, striking and ripping through the thin metal walls of the car. It sounded like what you might imagine hammers, beating and ripping through the sides of a metal trash can might sounded. I'd hear this same sound again, fourteen years later, when a couple of pimps decided to shoot-up a passing car, being driven by a police informant.

I saw the nickel sized holes appearing in the yellow Opel's grill, hood, while spiderwebbing the windshield. Initially, the holes appeared on the driver's side of the car, just as the older guard had instructed. A couple of seconds into the attack, the driver's head had suddenly snapped back. *He's dead!* Simultaneously, the dead driver appeared to have hit the brakes, for the front of the car violently dipped

down, which in turn, caused the dead driver's face to come flying forward onto the steering wheel. The car had almost stopped, but a moment later, his foot must have come off the brake, since the small car continued to barely creep forward, gently angling off the far side of the road. Fortunately, there was no other traffic or spectators to be accidentally be hit by the stray bullets. With the apparent death of the driver, both guns were then quickly trained onto the terrified passenger. The passenger's body was then violently flung around the car's front seat, by the unrelenting barrage of bullets. *He looks like he's dancing in the carseat.* Correspondingly, additional holes appeared in the windshield, hood and grill, but on the passenger side, and the headlight shattered. As the car veered a few feet further off the road, a dozen more holes materialized in the passenger's door. These shots were overkill and fired by the older guard. The young guard had stopped shooting, and just stood mouth open, gawking at the stopped car.

What the guns lacked in accuracy, they more than make-up for in firepower. *It's like a dream.* The explosive sounds and the grim death scene had riveted me. It's effect was not too different from the brief period of time, I'd experienced after the bomb

had detonated at my Grandparents' house. *It's too late to warn those two guys, now!* The demolished little car, with its' two dead occupants, had gently bumped through a shallow grassy depression, then stopped on top of a minor trash heap of dried gray eucalyptus branches and leaves, probably raked-up and left there, by some one-man road crew. The car had stopped barely eight feet off the road, and never even reached the bush, where the young guard had been hiding.

The car didn't explode, nor did it burst into flames, as I'd seen in the movies. Two jets of steam issued forth from its damaged radiator. The engine loped-on for a few seconds, then made a shuddering sound and turned off. With the silence, I realized that my ears were ringing. The two guards shouldered their weapons, and stood there looking at the stopped car, but the older guard pulled-out his black pistol. Maybe, he thought there was a hidden passenger, who might also need killing, but fortunately there wasn't anyone else, for him to kill. The pistol looked like an old black Walther P38, the standard nine millimeter used by the Nazis in WWII. *Some of the Nazis must have been like this older guy.*

The well-worn asphalt road was littered with

dozens of clean shiny brass spent shell casings. *They look like small polished bells*. Looking at the many brass shells, I judged the machine gun bullets to have been nine millimeters, as well. The two guards walked over and peered inside the car. Silently, I followed behind the older guard, that way I stayed out of his field of vision. I walked on the outside edge of my shoes so he wouldn't hear me. As I neared the car, the older guard began laughing and chuckling. *Holy shit, the old guard's actually laughing!* He therefore seemed insane, but no doubt he'd seen a lot of killing in their civil war! There was a timelessness to witnessing the killing of those teens. I think it made me more aware that death is always coming.

The older guard's laughter was owing to the fact that the passenger teen's right eye had been shot away. My mind struggled a bit, trying to sort-out the deformed face, and then I stopped analyzing; after all, it was dead. *Is laughing how this old guy handles fear, or maybe he's just that mean.* The dead passenger teen was leaning against the right side of the driver, and was facing the open passenger window. The passenger's youthful face, minus the right eye, reminded me of Dad's classified photo book of the

Spanish civil war executions, where most of the victims had been shot in the face and head, ergo many had an eye or two shot out. *Yes, this is it. This is what war really means… death.* Certainly, if you're going to die by firing squad, it's best to get it in the brain. Unless you want an open casket funeral, so you could suffer just a few seconds longer, then your family wouldn't have to look at your exploded head. But the thousands of dead guys in Dad's thick photo book were buried in mass graves, so their families probably didn't get to see their bodies. Even with my ears ringing, I suddenly could hear people yelling and coming our way, from back toward the city. They wanted to see what the shooting was about.

"He's not fit to drive with only one eye… a one eyed car thief. Maybe, he's winking at us." The older guard loudly joked. *This older guy is nuts.*

His humor was lost on the younger guard, who just stared at the dead teens, but said nothing, was pale, and once again had forgotten to close his mouth. Looking back, I now think that joke about the eye had simply been the joyous expression of a psychopath. Then again, almost all jokes are based on some type of fear: death, taxes, injury, jail, divorce, poverty, infidelity, realizing that you're a

psychopath, etc. Thinking back, the guard's humor was gangster-like, something similar, to what I'd later see on the TV series, *The Sopranos*.

"Whoever owns this car, better have plenty of money. The repair bills is gonna be big." The older guard continued to joke.

Almost certainly, the two guards were devout Catholics, as were the America's infamous Sicilian gangsters. Even Hitler had been baptized a Catholic, and correspondingly the Catholic church helped any number of the Nazi war criminals to escape justice. In 1999, Vatican files were discovered, indicating that Pope Pius XII, aided Hitler is destroying the Catholic opposition in Germany, helping to seal the fate of the Jews.

Perhaps, the young guard is gonna go to the confessional, now. The confessionals were open twenty-four seven, since one never knew, when a pang of conscious might strike, and the burdened confessor might be in fear of dying, before he or she could purge themselves, and so be unprepared to meet their Maker. The confessor doesn't even have to go into detail to receive absolution. Now days, there are scheduled times for the confessional, but one can make a special appointment if need be. Whatever

helps to increase the congregation roles and bring-in the donations.

Earlier that same afternoon, the matadors had been armed only with a cape and a sword, facing the deadly horns of extremely powerful, dangerous, and somewhat unpredictable, fighting bulls. The two federal policemen were armed with lethal machine guns and only faced two unsuspecting, unarmed teens. During that legal murder, I never felt any sorrow; in fact, I felt little. As strange and oxymoronic as it sounds, the La Guardia were sadistically cruel, but they weren't politically imprudent enough to shoot me, an eleven year old American kid. There'd have been too much political blowback. Also, when the guard had shoved me to the ground, it hadn't been done with malice, just a firm seriousness, and probably for my own safety.

After the cacophony of the two machine guns, the guards and I were almost deaf, and that ringing made the scene seem even more unreal. My ears still ring to this day, though a few things since then have worsened that ringing. It was an understatement to say that the episode was sobering. If you suffer with tinnitus, realize that I've tried acupuncture, as well as every over the counter remedy, and nothing has

helped in the slightest. For some, the tinnitus is so bad that suicide is the only solution.

The gory little spectacle has remained in my mind. The hole, where the right eye had been, had given the corpse an eerie appearance, especially since the other eye looked normal, and seemed to be looking at me. *Yeah, I know I let you down!* As mentioned, the dead one-eyed passenger was propped-up with his back against the right side of the driver teen, whose face was still pressed down into the steering wheel. A piece of the driver's hairy skull was sticking straight out from the back of his head, like a sparrow's wing, and there was a golfball-sized piece of pink brain tissue, protruding from the hole. For a second, I absurdly thought that perhaps the driver's soul had fled through that hole in the skull, where the bullet had exited. *Is there really a soul or is that just bullshit?*

Right before my eyes, the two bodies began changing color, from the familiar live flesh tone, to a lifeless grayish yellow. Until then, I didn't know that people changed color, when they died. Those three things: the missing eye, the sparrow's wing, and the color change, were the most memorable aspects of their death. Where I'd loved the blood and gore of

the bullring, this event only left me numb. I'd see a similar color change again, a few years later, when I'd become a lifeguard on an east coast beach, and a drowning would occur. Then, a few times, when I was a drug dealer, in Mexico City, I'd again see that color change.

The silent young Spanish guard continued to gape at the bodies. He was clearly not very happy with his role in the killings. *Maybe, he's going to quit his job. I need a real drink!* The older guy probably went to a bar and had a few drinks, to joke and brag with his buddies. The young guy likely went to the aforementioned confessional, then hit the bar, but without the joking and bragging.

One man's whiskey is for celebration, while for another it's medicinal.

The Bartenders Guide to The Universe by Lier A. Mowey

"Bless me father for I have sinned. It's been two years since my last confession. Today, I helped to execute a couple of young teenagers, who went joy-riding in a stolen car, but I was following orders." So

might have the younger guard confessed to his priest.

As the older guard was holstering his unfired pistol, he glanced back, and became aware that I was standing close behind him, looking at the two dead guys. He smirked and made a dramatic disgruntled exhalation, indicating he wanted me to leave. Taking one last glance at the dead passenger, and then at the stunned younger guard, I departed. Besides the small crowd from the city was nearly there, and I was already late getting home. *The young guard isn't made for killing.*

In a weird way at eleven years old, I knew the young guard was psychologically damaged by the event, but having grown-up around combat vets, I wrongly thought of men, who couldn't shrug-off violence, as being deficient, since that the cognitive parts of their mind wasn't able to properly function. At the time, I clung to the idea that perhaps the two teens had murdered someone, and deserved killing. As mentioned, I didn't find-out till the next evening from Dad, that all they'd done was to hot-wire the car and go joy-riding. Hot-wiring a car was easy in those days. Just yank the ignition wires and touch them together. With today's computerized cars, it's not as simple.

Prior to heading home that evening, walked a few blocks, and stopped at a dingy corner wine bar on the city's outskirts, bought a half liter of wine, and drank it on the way home. I clumsily climbed the perimeter fence, but when I was drunk, I was always extra careful, when dealing with the three barbwire strands, which ran along the top of the fence. Once on the base, I jogged to the beach and briefly swam in the water, to remove the smell of the wine, the pungent alcohol sweat, and I used the salt water to rinse-out my mouth. Arriving home dripping wet, Mom was standing at the front door, and saw me coming.

"Looked what the cat has finally dragged in, and boy is Joey late!." Mom called back over her shoulder, letting Dad know I was home late, and deserving of some kind of punishment, and again, confirming that I should have never put that snake down her dress.

Instead of saying I was at Cadiz and missed the ferry, I told Mom and Dad I'd been at the beach all day, fell asleep on the sand watching the sun going down, and that when I woke-up I felt sticky and itchy, so I took a quick swim, before heading home. Clearly, my Dad would soon be informed about the

killing of the two Spanish teens, and so I didn't want them to know that I'd been off the base for any reason. Dad just shook his head, since he wasn't sure whether I was lying or telling the truth, about being on the beach all day. In fact, many, if not most, of the events in this book, I've never shared with my parents. They are extremely fine people, but they were traditional. They were far better than I, ergo vastly different, and slightly judgmental.

That night, after my folks had gone to sleep, I raided the liquor cabinet, then went to sit on the back patio to sip on a double whiskey, and stare out into the black sky, just above the jet black bay. The waves were larger than normal, and I could both hear and feel them thunderously breaking on the beach below, and every so often, I'd see the lights of a boat cruising along the indistinct horizon, of the distant Atlantic. The lack of visual stimulation allowed me to repeatedly better see the shooting of the teens, over and over, just as if it was happening, again. That ability to see the gory scene, as if I were watching a movie rerun, and although this phenomena surprised me, it also seemed completely natural. Feeling the ground shake because of the waves, in conjunction with watching the replay of

the shooting, was interesting. I'd see the men being jerked-around by the bullets, and feel the ground beneath me vibrate. My heart would pound. I'd sweat some. My mouth was dry, so I sipped the booze. Still, I was okay with these flashbacks, and somewhat enjoyed them. After enough booze, they stopped, and I headed for bed.

There's an old joke about a man, walking down the street, who falls into a deep open manhole. Pretty soon a doctor walks-up and sees the man down in the hole. The man asked the doc for help. Ergo, the physician wrote-out a script and dropped it in the hole. Next a priest walks up and sees the man still in the hole. Again the man asks for help. The priest says a prayer, leaves and the man remains in the hole. Then, one of his old friends walks-up and jumps down in the hole. The man in the hole says, 'now we're both stuck down here.' The friend replies, 'Yeah, I've been down here before, and know the way out.'

Yeah, I should have talked to an old WWII pilot. Most of them had *PTSD*, at least their wives talked about their nightmares. My parents slept like stones, so I never worried about them waking-up and catching me. Dad only awoke, if he had one of his

PTSD nightmares. Since he awoke screaming loudly, he afforded me enough warning to quietly sneak back to my bed undetected. Mom and Dad would briefly talk after he screamed, so they couldn't hear me sneaking back to my bed. Maybe, that's why I enjoyed the flashbacks… they were somewhat familiar.

For a few months after that day, I'd often see the machine-gunning of the two teenagers, over and over, just as it had happened, complete with: the piece of skull which looked like a bird's wing, their bodies bouncing around inside the little yellow car, the shot-out eye with the other dead eye staring at me, the older guard's joking, and the younger guard's expressions. Sometimes, I'd be sitting in a sixth grade class, and suddenly it was like I was again at the shooting. Sometimes, the teacher would walk back to my desk, place her hand on my shoulder, and ask if I was okay. I'd simply say, "Yes," and then I'd notice I was slightly damp with perspiration, and I'd be breathing hard. Still, I didn't find the flashbacks to be unpleasant; they were merely absorbing.

The flashbacks made me wonder, if my Dad had his own flashbacks, or did he just have those screaming nightmares. For me a flashback is a type of

pseudo hallucination, a series of memories, which seem so real, that while they're happening, I think it's real, yet part of me knows they're not. My flashbacks have been seriously attention-getting, and not really unpleasant. I'd see the event, but it is unlike my usual hallucinations, which still incorporated some aspect of the real world, like a bush would turns into a beautiful woman, or the surface of the roadway would look like water, or a trashcan turns into a bengal tiger. However, my flashbacks were not triggered by reality. They were strictly vivid longterm memory circuits, firing-off in technicolor, but for no apparent reason. They more or less block-out or takeover my visual and auditory senses to enhance the replay. That's about the best I can do in describing them. Of course, if you have flashbacks, then you realize exactly what I'm saying.

My mother thought the best thing about touring Europe was seeing things like: the museums, the Eiffel tower, the crown jewels, Buckingham palace, the Sistine chapel in the Apostolic Palace, the Roman colosseum, the Louvre, etc. No doubt, those things are indeed interesting for most people, but in my childish mind, they didn't compare to my off-base experiences. I was into sex with Anna, and violence

at the bullfights, ergo looking at old collectables, jewels, paintings, sculptures, as well as old and not so old buildings, did little for my childhood mind. To appease my mother, I'd always simply lie and agreed with her that those dreary touristy things were great, and I still continue to lie to her; anything so she doesn't cry or get angry. Mom welds her emotions like a weapon, so I've never really told her much about my life. Mom principally liked going to Europe, so that she could tell her friends, that she'd been there. She loved to beat her friends about the head and shoulders, with her various condescending, and boring dialogues, about her European travels. Dad visited to many more countries, and killed lots of people in some of those countries, but rarely if ever, said much about them.

Even now, Mom loves to brag about having been to those famous places in Europe. So many people live life, so that they can impress their friends and family, yet never get around to actually living life for themselves, and so their life remains something of a contrived show, rather than something, which fulfills their desires. Or, maybe they're just confused about their desires. Dad was right about the power engendered, by keeping a secret. He advised to

always keep a portion of your life classified. Many years later, when I was in my early forties, more than thirty years after the shooting of the two teens, I began to occasionally tell folks about the machine-gunning of the teens, thereby giving-up the power of that event. Oddly enough, no one has ever asked me to elaborate. It was as if they didn't want to hear about it, so I gave-up mentioning it, until writing about it, here.

Maybe, the hidden treasure of keeping a secret is self confidence.

The Holy Soul by Millar Woley

People pay good money to watch violent movies, but usually don't want to see, or hear about, the real thing. Combat veterans generally only discuss combat with their fellow vets, and in that way, they know the person listening isn't judging, and their memories stimulate the sympathetic ganglionic chains to encourage the adrenal glands to release adrenaline, while their pituitary releases beta-endorphin (an endogenous painkiller); as a result, all present get a shared vicarious high.

When it comes to the tendency to commit, enjoy, or abhor violence, there are extraordinary differences between people. Each has their particular place on the spectrum, from the profound distaste, to supreme enjoyment, of violence. Yet even with such a broad range, many people expect you to appreciate their particular place on the spectrum, as being the most reasonable position. Obviously, the parts of the brain which create violence, vary from one person to another, but each person feels that he or she is justified, level-headed, and relatively normal, even when they're actually operating on one extreme end of the spectrum. The problem is that we can only judge our minds, with our own three pounds of giggly gray mush. I've often wondered if there is a correlation between the ability to handle one's flashbacks and one's ability to deal with violence. Perhaps, my strongest flashbacks came about thirty years after the shooting of the teens. I was driving in Colorado. Off the right side of the road, and up on the sidewalk, about one hundred yards ahead of me, stood an older blond woman, who appeared to be violently arguing with a tall, much younger, man. Her arms were thrashing the air just in front of his face, implying that she was furious with him. The man just stood motionless, but his face looked fierce,

and then he seemed to be shouting something, back at her.

As my car neared the contentious couple, the irate woman, who had her back to the road, unexpectedly turned her head to her right, and gave me a brief beseeching glance, then she instantly swiveled her face back to glare at the man. She then stopped her yelling, and a second later, she unexpectedly dashed-out into the path of my car. As strangely improbable as this might sound, she actually sprinted backwards, directly in front of my car, without even looking at me a second time. I believe she did this intentionally, as if to prove to the man that whatever it was that they were arguing about, she was willing to die for, or to commit suicide for… death via passing motorist. She seemed to be sacrificing it all to make her point, with the man.

I know that the woman's reverse sprint sounds bizarre, but that is exactly what she did. Even the man, she was arguing with, appeared stunned, as she launched-out backwards. She'd obviously made the decision in a moment of poor thought. Of course, I stomped on the brakes and swiftly steered to the left, but there simply wasn't enough time to miss her. Her

body was unavoidable! Later, I'd be told that she was in her fifties, yet she ran backwards like a young athletic woman in her twenties.

The right headlight struck her right hip. Her body was lifted-up onto the top of the right front fender, and I think that her neck quickly snapped, when her head struck the crest of the steel reinforced metal fender. The back of her blond haired head was visible, in front of the passenger portion of the windshield. The woman appeared to have died instantly. As the car came to a stop, her lifeless body limply slide off the car, and down onto the asphalt. The man, she had been arguing with, just stood looking at her body, and didn't approach her, but then he hurriedly turned and ran away. Even though I sensed she was dead, I ran to the adjacent campus house to find a phone, and phoned for help. The campus house turned-out to be a young women's sorority. The front door to the house was locked, but without giving it a second thought, I simply put my hand effortlessly through one of the door's thin glass panes, and didn't receive so much as a scratch. Reaching inside, I unlocked and opened the door. Once through the foyer, I spied a phone sitting on the floor in the hallway. Lifting the receiver, I dialed 'O,'

on the rotary dial, giving the address, I asked for an ambulance, just incase the woman might have been alive; nevertheless, I knew she had died, so I guess the request was just a formality. I also asked that the police be sent. The sorority girls silently stood in the hallway, listening to my comments. *Thank God, I haven't been drinking!* Over and over, I would try to understand why the woman had run out in front of me, and what it was that she and the man been arguing about? I'd never find out. Later, I looked for the man, but never found him, either.

The ambulance and police came quickly. There was no effort made to revive her. I explained what had happened, but at first, the cop found it hard to believe that the dead woman had sprinted in reverse, much less that she had looked at me, before she did so. Fortunately, there were two older woman sitting on their porch, not two hundred feet from the accident. While they hadn't seen her look at me, they had seen her odd reverse sprint, and told the cops.

One of the cops drove me to the hospital to collect a blood sample, to verify that I wasn't chemically compromised. While in the ER room, I looked at myself in the mirror. My green irises were nearly completely gone; there were only thin green

rims, surrounding large black liquid pools of shock, yet I seemed to feel okay, not good, not bad… just nothing… numb. Everything appeared extremely bright and vivid, every voice in the emergency seemed so clear, my thoughts were also clear, but there wasn't the slightest aggregate of emotion, or awareness of time.

Every day after the accident, for about a solid year, I would relive the sad event, in that I would abruptly see everything, just as if it was happening, again: the poor woman glancing at me, running backwards, her body coming up and over-top of the fender, and her blond hair making impact on the top of the right fender, that finite thump… realistic flashbacks, over and over, day after day. Sometimes, I've have multiple flashbacks in a day. Several times during my life, I've sustained flashbacks, from various unpleasant events, but I didn't have nightmares, about killing the woman, at least, none I remembered. I did have nightmares about being a lifeguard on the beach at Ocean City, Maryland.

The daytime flashbacks were vivid and a little jarring, but I didn't pay them much mind. A sneeze can be jarring, but at the end of the day, you've paid it little attention. And, just like the guards killing the

two teenagers, the flashbacks seemed to be completely unconnected to what was going on in my life. Seemingly unrelated things would cause me recall hitting the poor woman, just like I'd relive seeing the two teens, who'd been machine gunned by the guards. In both cases I'd flash on those scenes for months after. As you might think those flashbacks depressed me, but actually they they only felt unexpected, intense, and they lasted only for a few seconds, They did seem hugely realistic. My heart would pound hard, and I'd sweat a bit. Sometimes my ribs and armpits would be soaked, and sometimes only my forehead would be damp. Regardless of how intense the flashbacks, I'd just carry on with my day, as if nothing had happened.

Occasionally, the flashbacks could be problematic if they occurred at some inopportune time: sitting in a lecture, during sex, interacting with a group of friends, during a game of chess, etc., and very now and then, I'd experience a flashback while driving. Oddly enough, I could still continue-on with sex, and miraculously I could safely drive the car, while I was undergoing the flashback. It was like there was a separate portion of my brain, which remained devoted to carrying-on with the sex, or the

driving. On the other hand, the flashbacks would disrupt playing chess, and group interactions. Though flashbacks were abnormal, something told me they were okay, if not psychologically heeling. I never fretted about having them, and eventually they'd reduce in frequency, and finally disappear, altogether. Albeit, I'm not certain, I believe that each of my bouts with flashbacks was like a therapeutic event, allowing my brain to better deal with, and overtime dispose of, the unpleasant memories. Now, I hardly think about the two teens, who were machined-gunned, or the poor woman I killed, but I'll never completely forget them. Never-the-less, I'd still like to know why the older lady was in front of a sorority house, arguing with that younger man, and what made her reverse sprint in front of my car.

Early one morning, a couple of weeks, after I killed her, a policeman came knocking on my apartment door. I invited him in. He'd come to warn me that the woman's son was angry about his mother's death, and might be looking to do me harm. In those days, I lived on the second floor of an old apartment building. There was a staircase at either end of my hallway. At one end of my hallway, there were steel exterior stairs, and at the other end was a

set of carpeted interior stairs. For free rent, I managed the apartment building, while I attended graduate school.

One evening, a few days after the visit from the cop, I drove home and parked behind my building. After climbing-up the exterior metal stairs, I opened the door, and stepped into my second floor hallway. As the door closed behind me, someone else simultaneously had ascended the stairs at the other end of the hall. My room was located roughly in the middle of that hallway. The young man and I were separated by about ninety feet of hallway. Recalling the cop's warning, I immediately stopped, as did the other man. He plainly wasn't someone, who lived in the building… *a stranger.* We just stared at each other, for a good fifteen-seconds, while I felt sorry for him. Likely, he loved his mother dearly, and was a good son.

Neither of us spoke, but just looked at each other, then he finally gave a little nod, turned, and went back down the stairs, and out of the front door of the building. *He wants some kind of closure.* My feeling was he just settled for seeing what I looked like, or maybe he wanted me to say something, but changed his mind. I wanted to say something, but

realized that apologizing could be tricky. To a grief stricken person, an apology can be like an admission of guilt and therefore trigger an attack. I hadn't known how to proceed with the encounter, other than to remain silent. If I appeared fearful, the encounter might have been different, but I had no fear, no empathy… nothing. Still, from ninety feet away I felt his grief, ergo I had merely opted for standing silently.

One month later, I would have an encounter, exactly were the women's son had been standing at the top of the stairs. It would result in my indirectly killing a man. Logically, I know that the two events are unrelated, but somehow I always felt they were connected, for what were the odds, both the sobering events would happened in the exact same location. This second occurrence, of inadvertently killing a man, more or less began a few months, before I killed the woman.

One morning, I was in my apartment, desperately trying to memorize the structure of the twenty-one amino acids for an advanced biochemistry test, when there were three gentle taps at my apartment door, almost like you'd imagine a child knocking. Opening my door, there stood a

rather frail older woman, wearing a small straw hat pinned to her gray hair, on the back of her head. *What's with older women and weird hats?* White leather flats covered her narrow feet. Her yellow dress fit tightly to her thin frame. It came complete with long sleeves, white cuffs, and an old timey high white laced collar. *She looks right out of the 1800s.* The satiny canary yellow dress extended well below her knees, and thin blue veins decorated her pale legs and ankles. She stood ram rod straight, clasped her hands in front of her waist, looked at me, and rapidly blinked several times, before speaking. She seemed fidgety, and I remember thinking that she probably drank too much coffee.

"Are you the manager of this apartment building?" She demanded, as she simultaneously raised up on her toes.

"Yes ma'am, how can I help you?" I asked, inviting her in and offering her a chair, as well as a cup of coffee, but she only accepted the chair.

The woman introduced herself, and I reciprocated. She then asked about availability of apartments, monthly rental costs, length of the lease, etc. In response to her questions, I threw-in the fact that the apartment building was owned by an

attorney. There was one vacant apartment, and so I filled her in on the details of the rental agreement. But, in lieu of the fact that the entire building was currently inhabited with various male university students, and was therefore often a beehive of partying and sexual activity, I was trying in a nice way to turn down her request, that the apartment was not well suited to her. Sensing that I was trying to do this, she held-up her hand, to cut me off.

"I'll take it, young man, but don't worry; it's not for me. It's for my grandson. He's just graduated from Stanford, and will be seeking further education, here, at this university. He'll be arriving in two days, and will be in need of a residence. He's young, and this place is right across the street from the university, so its perfect. I'll be paying the first month's rent and the deposit, for him, now, and I'll sign all the necessary paperwork. I have power of attorney."

At first, I was thrilled to acquire a tenant, sight-unseen, for it meant that the building's thirty-six apartments were all filled, which would make the building's owner happy. And so, I handed her the standard six month lease. She walked over to my desk, showed me the power of attorney, her ID, and

she promptly signed the lease. Foolishly I allowed her to sign in place of him, without considering why she had the power of attorney. She seemed too honest. After she had graciously paid the deposit, and first month's rent, she took her receipt and left. Erroneously, I had assumed that her grandson would be normal, after all, he'd just graduated from Stanford, so he had to be somewhat reasonable.

Accepting a tenant sight-unseen, turned-out to be a serious mistake. When the Stanford graduate first showed-up, to claim the apartment, he seemed fine. He arrived with only three things, a collapsed ten foot domed tent, which was neatly rolled and tucked-up under his left arm, a blow-up air-mattress, folded-up and under his right arm, and a backpack, containing his clothes, and a toothbrush, etc. The apartment was unfurnished, but many students didn't care about furniture, except for a bed and a desk, but as mentioned, he had his own blow-up mattress, and he'd already graduated so he didn't need the desk. Shaking his hand, I introduced myself, and handed him the apartment key. In a just few months, I'd kill him. Throughout my life I'd kill a few people, and I can remember them well, yet I have trouble bring them to mind. He thanked me and told me to call

him, “DX,” rather than Sidney, which his grandmother had been printed on the lease. While I thought his name to be somewhat unusual, it was 1980, and there were plenty of people with weird names, so I just replied, “Welcome aboard, DX.”

The new tenant, with the unusual alias, turned-out to be a severely paranoid schizophrenic. DX, was an abbreviation for long distant communications, and it also stands for digital transformations, where new technologies are applied to radially alter procedures and processes. DXing was a hobby with certain folks, trying to receive and record various long distance radio and TV communication signals. I suppose, it was an appropriate name for him, since he regularly communicated with space aliens, not only those impersonating humans here on earth, both those living in distant galaxies. DX quickly formed various unpleasant delusions about almost every tenant in the building, and became a major disruptive force. Being a fairly big man, he could be a bit intimidating, but it was mostly bluff. He erected his domed tent in the living room of his apartment, and slept on the air mattress, inside the tent. The tent, allowed him to block-out communications with the ‘evil’ aliens, while still being able to communicate

with the ‘good’ aliens. The tent was a communications filter of sort. I thought it was just nylon. He’d purchased the technologically advanced tent for three dollars at a *Salvation Army* thrift store. A good alien had left it there for him.

DX’s apartment was downstairs on the first floor, at one end of the hall. Often, I had other tenants, living down on the first floor, come up and bang on my door, waking me up, to complain about DX. He’d be in his room loudly laughing, and not just some run-of-the-mill fun-filled laughter, but a deep, extremely loud sinister laugh, a deep theatrical psychopathic laugh. It was the kind of laugh that comes from some dark vile psychopathic recess of the brain, the kind that might be used in a horror film, and causes the hairs to stand-up on the back of your neck. To stop his macabre laughter, I’d simply pound the crap out of his door and yell, “Shut the fuck-up DX, you’re keeping everyone awake, with that stupid laugh of yours! First thing tomorrow, you need to go to see your psychiatrist, and get on some new meds that work. You’re crazy as a fucking hoot-owl, and you’re making me nuts, with all your stupid crazy shit. So, shut the fuck-up, you God damned lunatic, or I’m calling the police, and you can laugh in a jail

cell, tonight."

Though ethically I might have been out of line, that rather crude action on my part actually worked well, for schizophrenics often can sense truth, and some part of them knows that they're a little off. DX knew he was insane, and he knew I didn't hate him, and so if I called him crazy or lunatic, it actually seemed to make him reevaluate himself. But the laughter thing is just one example of the massive amounts of trouble, which poor insane DX, brought to my building. He was a living nightmare, since I was constantly settling conflicts, he'd started with the various tenants, who generally lacked any understanding of schizophrenia, and had not the slightest amount of concern for his wellbeing.

One morning, DX went from tenant to tenant, claiming that the night before, he'd been visited by Jesus Christ, and that he literally had gay sexual relations with the Lord! He asserted that even though he (DX) was a male, that he was going to give birth to the seconding coming, the next manifestation of God on earth, and it was going to be a female God-child, to be born from his anus. You can just imagine how well that delusional revelation went over with the highly religious folks in my building. Needless to

say, they had no tolerance for DX, ergo I had to regularly keep a couple of tenants from beating-up poor DX.

At one point, while DX was still a resident, my girlfriend was involved in a major car wreck. Her face went through the windshield. Her daughter phoned me, so I rushed to the clinic, where she'd been taken. While a plastic surgeon was fortunately present, there was no surgical nurse available to assist. The nurses had gone on strike, so the surgeon allowed me to help him. This primarily meant that I put on a surgical mask and a pair of latex gloves, and gently held the wound edges in the proper alignment, while the surgeon carefully stitched. The procedure was actually a snap. The doc did such a fine job, that later her scars were hardly noticeable, even though she had olive skin, which tended to easily scar. Often the darker the skin, the more prone it is to hypertrophic scars, and keloids. After the surgery, I took her to her house, waited on her hand and foot, while I still had my jobs to work, and graduate classes to attend. As a result, I hadn't been home, nor had I gotten any sleep, for three days. When I finally returned to the apartment building, I was completely burned-out, just hoping to crash in my bed.

Entering the building, I climbed the stairs to the second floor. At that time, DX was having one of his psychotic episodes. I'd barely gotten to the second floor landing, when DX suddenly came-up behind me. It was the exact same spot where the dead woman's son had stood gazing at me, right at the top of the stairs. Crazy DX started punching me in the back, while yelling, "Where have you been? What have you been doing?" Later, I'd have huge bruises on my back, from were he'd repeatedly hit me. His words implied that I done something, which likely meant that I'd somehow managed to fit into one of his fearful paranoid delusions, but right then I was too tired to put-up with him, and I lost my temper, turned and punched him in the face. The blow caused him to go over backwards and tumble down the stairs to the first floor. At the end of the descent, his upper arm flailed outward striking the thick wooden post supporting the lower end of the banister, ergo he broke his upper arm, a complete fracture of the humerus. DX screamed and ran out the door. At the time, I honestly didn't care, and went to my apartment, slugged-down a few shots, and climbed in bed.

The next day, DX returned with a cast on his

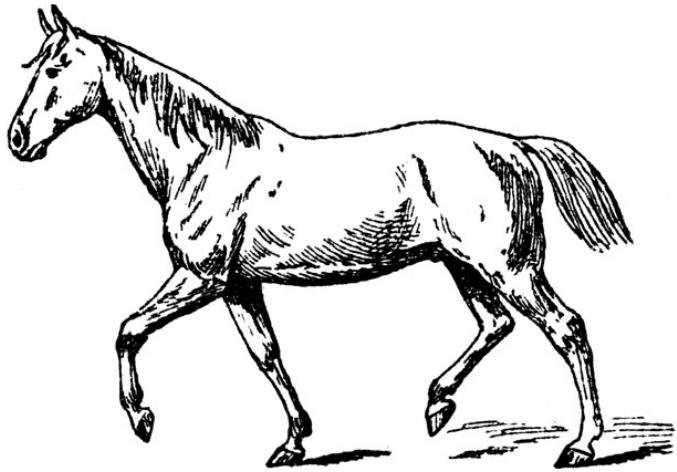
arm, accompanied by two policemen. The cops asked me what had happened. I told them, and showed them the bruises on my back, where DX had repeated punched me. They looked at DX and he admitted he'd done that, so cops told DX, that they were not going to arrest me. Their refusal to jail me markedly upset DX, and he turned and again stormed-out of the building.

The next day, I went out to the back parking lot, and noticed that someone, had broken the driver's window of my car, and that they were sitting in my driver's seat, so I yanked-open the driver's door. At first, I thought perhaps it was DX sleeping, but upon closer examination, I realized it was indeed DX behind the steering wheel, but he was dead. The bottom of the shotgun's stock was still between his feet, resting on the car floor, and the barrel was laying against the inside of his right thigh. He was sitting almost straight-up, with his head back and leaning slightly to his right, as if he was looking at the roof of the car. Much of the back of his head was gone, some of his brain and skull were on the backseat. He'd managed this suicide, even with the cast still on his arm. I'd let the carseat all the way back, to make room for the gun, in front of the

steering wheel. I wondered where he'd gotten the shotgun, but I never found-out. The medical examiner took the body, and the police took the long double barreled shotgun. I threw DX's tent and other things in the dumpster.

After the police and the coroner left, it took hours to cleanup the mess in my car. I repaired the roof of the car, using a hammer, some fine screen, sandpaper, a little bondo body filler, and some auto spray paint which almost matched. The car's roof never quite looked the same, but it was a cheap car, and it drove. I took-out the bloody headliner and had a new one installed for ten bucks. (Years later, I'd meet a man whose friend had killed himself the same way, but did so inside a truck.) For a few months, I had flashbacks about seeing the DX's corpse in my car. His death was partially my fault. While I told my girlfriend about DX's death, I never told her that DX had done the deed in my car, and because my car, at the time, was such a junker, she never noticed the new headliner, nor that the car roof had been repaired. She was too preoccupied with her face healing. I've often wondered what DX was thinking, when he pulled the trigger. Sometimes I think it was depression due to the realization that he was trapped

in schizophrenia; sometimes, I think he was just in a hurry to get with the aliens.



THE GHOST HORSE AND THE PSYCHOPATH

At age eleven, after eight years of drinking whiskey everyday, I began shotgun shooting. My involvement with the sport unwittingly began by happenstance. One Saturday afternoon, in brilliantly sunny southern Spain, Dad had agreed to take me to lunch at the base cafeteria. It was an exciting, but rare, event. Going to eat with Dad was a big deal for me, since he rarely took me anywhere. One entire

wall of the large military eatery was nothing but windows, so the diners could look-out onto the flight-line, and so while eating, Dad and I would watch the planes landing and taking-off. He'd make informative comments about each type of aircraft, and critique their landings. In those days, the airport was much more active, with less separation between arriving and departing planes. Since takeoffs are relatively easy, Dad didn't comment on them. In the three years living on the base, Dad and I only ate there together only twice, since his job was extremely demanding. I ate there alone, about a two dozen times. I loved aircraft but never became a pilot. Maybe, I knew something.

That afternoon, as we were driving to the base cafeteria, Dad's car was suddenly intercepted by a shore patrol van. The van passed us, the driver signaled to Dad with his hand. Dad pulled over onto the dusty shoulder. The shore patrol enlisted man got out and walked back to speak with Dad. Dad said he had to go back to work, and didn't have time to eat. There was some kind of base emergency, which Dad had to attend to. Most likely a diplomatic fire had to be finessed, involving some local Spanish authorities. Dad was forever presiding over such problems, where

some American military personnel, or some dependent, had injured or offended a Spaniard. About seventy percent of the time, the offense was real, and more often than not, alcohol-related. Drunk sailors were famous for their political liability, that has probably continued into present day.

The other thirty percent of the time, it was some greedy Spanish shop, bar, or restaurant owner, looking for an easy handout, from the US government. Sometimes, the Spaniard got the handout, sometimes the Spanish police locked-up the greedy Spaniard. Since Spain was exceedingly poor, the government handouts were typically attenuated. A hundred dollar payout to a poor Spaniard was like a fortune, then. Dad should have written a book about those tedious machinations, involving: Spanish citizens, bar owners, prostitutes, drunken fights, the Navy's Shore Patrol, the La Guardia de Civil, the local Spanish police, Spanish jail personnel, the mayor of some town, car wrecks, hit and runs, knives, guns, etc. There was some sort of slush fund for diplomatic payouts.

Dad could sense that I was fairly disappointed that I wasn't going to eat with him at the cafeteria, so on his way back to headquarters that day, he

made a slight detour, and dropped me off at the base shooting range. As he pulled away, he shouted,

"Joey… Go watch the men shoot at the range, and see what you can learn, just don't get in the way and shot. Never get in front of the business end of a gun, and if you hold a gun, never point one at anyone, even if it's unload… never! The only time you do that is when you have to kill someone. Make sure that you're home in time for dinner, or your Mom will be upset with you and me. Find someone to give you a ride home. You know my office number, if you need me. Behave yourself! Tell me at dinner, what you learn at the shooting range, today."

Following Dad's advice, I walked over to the trap and skeet ranges, and watched the shooters blasting away with shotguns at fast flying 108 mm clay discs. There was also a pistol and rifle range, but I preferred watching the shotgun shooting. There was more action to it, more movement, and high speed exploding targets, ergo it seemed much more exciting. Laying on the ground with a rifle or standing holding a pistol, trying to relax to be as still as possible seemed comparatively boring. Besides, I'd already shot my Grandpa's .22 rifle, and wanted something different. Moving targets were more

interesting, than blasting away at stationery targets.

After a couple of hours watching the shooters, one considerate lieutenant allowed me to shoot his shotgun. He showed me how to properly lead the clay pigeon, to aim ahead of its flight, so that once fired, the birdshot would meet-up with the fast moving clay disc. At the age of eleven, ninety percent of the time, I used shotguns. The other ten percent of the time, I's shoot at fixed paper targets using an M1 garand, an old thirty caliber semi-automatic rifle, which had been used by many of the soldiers, during WWII. The rifle range was only one hundred yards long. The garand was heavy, but didn't kick quite as hard as did the shotgun; nonetheless, both the rifle and the shotguns bruised the juncture of my chest and shoulder, later giving it a bluish cast. It would hurt for a couple of days, then I'd go back to the range. At Dad's suggestion, I started doing push-ups to strengthen and thicken my shoulder and chest muscles, to better cushion the gun's recoil.

For a nominal fee, I could rent a garand, or a double barreled shotgun, and purchase the corresponding ammo. At first, I remained partial to the old fashioned side-by-side double barrel, with just the two shots. Automatic shotguns held five

rounds, but skeet and trap shooting never allowed more than two shots, anyway, so the automatic seemed unnecessary. Back then, a child, living on the base, didn't need parental permission, or supervision, to shoot. One of the men, who was frequently at the range was Mr. White, the base administrative officer. Dad was his immediate supervisor. Mr. White would frequently allow me to shoot a round of trap with his expensive *Beretta* double-barrel, an over and under twelve gauge. It looked a lot like the *Browning* 12 gauge, except it had engraved silver sided chamber, and two triggers, one for each barrel, instead of one trigger for both barrels, that the *Browning* had. The *Browning* came from Belgium and the *Beretta* from Italy. I preferred the *Browning,* though the *Beretta* was prettier and a little more expensive. The base-run shooting range was only a twelve minute bicycle ride from our house on the cliff; so from then on, I started pedaling to the range, and would rent the old cheaply made side-by-side twelve gauge for twenty-five cents. A box of twenty-five shotgun shells was only fifty cents, both on the base at the shooting range and off the base in the nearby towns. For many months, I saved up my paper route money and bought my own shotgun. A round of skeet or trap was only twenty-five cents, so before I bought my

own shotgun, I could shoot a round of skeet or trap for one dollar (gun rental, shells, and clay pigeons), but every so often, the range officer, a combat vet, who knew Dad, would treat me to a free round.

To shoot regularly, I needed to make more money, ergo I started buying larger amounts of fireworks off the base to sell to my friends and classmates, generally tripling or quadrupling my money. The owner of the fireworks store, made his own pyrotechnics, and he was a discerning vendor, knowing exactly what types of fireworks American kids liked, the bigger and louder, the better. Now and then, I'd also buy switchblades at a small store in Rota, and sell them to kids and sailors on the base, for roughly three times their price. Frequently, I'd sell them to the drunk sailors at the bars in Puerto. In those days, parents didn't seem to care if their kid owned a switchblade. It was just a knife, which opened more quickly. The larger Stiletto blades I'd sell to pilots to carry in their flight suits as a survival tool. Shooting at the range had turned me into a minor entrepreneur, so I could shoot more often and save-up for a new shotgun.

In addition, I found there was a market on the navy base for antique collector coins. Coin collecting

seemed to be more common, in those days. Most of the coins I'd buy had been minted in the 1400s to the 1800s. I'd go to antique stores in Cadiz, Puerto, and Jerez, to purchase the old coins for resale; usually, they were silver European and Moroccan coins, and oddly enough, I'd occasionally find some coins from China and India. All I had for referencing the coins was a common brown world coin book. In effect, it was my Bible for buying and selling coins. Back in the 1950s, there weren't as many counterfeit coins, as there are today, though I did see a couple of low quality counterfeits. My best coin buyer was a commander, a tall older Jewish gentleman, who was deadly serious about every aspect of his life. He demanded that I come to him first, whenever I had new coins for sale.

He was an electrical engineer, who made me promise never to reveal that he was one of my customers, so I never mentioned him, not even to my parents. I assume that he demanded my confidentiality, because he kept his coin collection in his house. There were no safety deposit boxes on the base. The commander repeatedly reminded me to keep all of my financial dealings, as secret as possible. Again and again, he told me, that in the

long run, I'd be better off hiding my cash, than by putting it in a bank, and that I should always give people the impression, that I had far less money than whatever amount I actually possessed. At the old commander's advice, I took to hiding my money, even from my parents, putting it in a jar and stashing it in the corner, up behind a rafter in the outside garden shed, and following his advice, I never told the old commander, that I hid my money. The impression, that old man made on me, has lasted to this day.

"Joey, you only put money in a bank for appearances sake, or to have a place to cash your paychecks. Never never never let anyone know about your real wealth. Don't tell anyone what you have, not even your parents. And when you get married, certainly never ever tell your wife, or kids. Only let them see the bank account, and keep it low… a month-to-month deal. Of course, you can be kind and generous, but if you're too generous, people come to expect you to give them things. Money is a very private thing. Keep your money in three parts: land, business, and your own secret stash." He solemnly instructed me.

The Jewish commander was also a strict father,

to the point that years later, his good and highly intelligent son refused to speak with him; actually, each refused to talk to the other, and they only communicated thru the commander's wife. The father-son breakup occurred over an academic issue. The father wanted the son to become a chemical engineer, but the son preferred becoming a psychologist. The commander realized the son had the brains to study anything, and that chemical engineering paid much more than being a psychologist. Nonetheless, the son liked the idea of helping people. Basically, the father excommunicated the son, who was all too happy that he did. Last I heard, they were still not talking for more than forty years. It's been my limited experience that some Jews, if not many Jews, take money too seriously, and something tells me there's a genetic component to that particular behavior; after all, selfishness and greed would be obvious evolutionary advantages, designed to enhance survival of the species.

The Jewish commander was so concerned about wealth, that to me, he seemed slightly removed from the real world, but then again, the real world is defined differently, with every three pounds of gray mush. If he asked me how much I was asking for a

coin, and I said ‘five dollars,’ he’d automatically offer much much less, and if we settled, it was somewhere in between. Consequently, I learned to always start high. We both enjoyed the haggling. That commander was the only person, who fronted me money. Later in our business dealings, he trusted me enough to give me fifty dollars in advance, to purchase coins for him. I kept ten of the forty dollars, in effect, I was working for a commission. That way, I made a little money, but gained more clout with the antique store owners. My approach to buying coins was simple. If I found a coin to buy, I’d look it up in my coin book, and would only pay twenty percent, or less, of its listed value, provided the condition was adequate. I avoided coins which had been cleaned, bent, dented, scratched, pitted, or had holes.

The commander was so heavily focused on his money, I couldn’t help but think he’d missed much of life’s love, beauty, and fun, yet he no doubt left behind a sizable financial legacy. With my parent’s permission, twice he took me with him to a family-owned bank in Gibraltar, *Banco Galliano*, to buy gold collector coins, for which he paid only the price of their gold content. The bank would simply weight the gold coin on a scale, right on top of the glass

counter top. He converted lots of his cash into gold and hid it somewhere. Back then, the spot price of gold was barely over thirty-five dollars an ounce. A year later, I'd managed to save-up sufficient funds to buy a gold coin. I'd also found a nickel-sized gold coin in a river bed, while visiting Florence, Italy. I just spotted the glint of the thin gold edge of the coin, partially hidden under a stone along the edge of the Arno River. Where the coin laid, the water was less than a foot deep.

The old Jew was good to me, and a natural born educator. I suppose that often comes with a high IQ, or with a serious understanding about how somethings work. However, the brilliant commander seemed to lack one ingredient of being a good teacher… he cared more about the ideas he taught, than he cared for his pupil. Supposedly, his field was aeronautical engineering, but I think his real job was spying. He was gone for weeks at a time, and he didn't have the phenotypic characteristics of a Jew, and so he could have fit in with many different ethnicities. Moreover, he spoke several languages. He was the type of man that you could sense was easily capable of killing someone, who needed killing.

"Believe it or not, banks steal people's money

and abscond with their savings in a myriad of ways, Joey. Now, the radio, newspapers, and television, at least in the United States, make people think they need to put their money in a bank to be safe. One day the people will be so brainwashed that the banks won't even pay any genuine interest! In the great depression, the banks just screamed bankruptcy and slammed their doors, and kept everyone's money.

Today, bankers are constantly looking for legal ways to steal. All they've got to do is to claim that their going belly-up, saying that the their patrons haven't paid their loans, and said banks will seem to appear legitimate in their claims for bankruptcy. Besides, with all the money they steal, they can easily bribe judges and politicians. And as for the government insuring people's savings, that's a lot of poppycock; the government doesn't have nearly enough money to cover all the folks, who have their money in the banks. Most people believe that the banks would never take their money, but given the right circumstances, they certainly will. The general populace is so easily fooled. There's nothing quite like mass credulity. The old jew used to say things like,

"Never underestimate a banker's greed, kid. If

you want to make interest on your money, use your money to operate a surreptitious cash business, much as you're doing here with these coins and your fireworks sales, but remember to always conceal your money, and make sure a bunch of it is gold. You can always sell high quality jewels and gold, and in your case, coins, without drawing notice to yourself. Each time you buy or sell make it seem as if it a unique event in your life. Remember, when you marry, never tell your wife or kids about your money or your covert buying and selling… never! Marriages sometimes don't last, but you'll always need money. Even if your marriage is a good one, women like nothing better than to spend money on frivolous things. Oh… they may truly believe they're not frivolous, but they always are. It's all part of their 'nesting building instinct.' Every woman, who wants a family, can't overcome their nesting instinct. One day, if you're lucky enough, you'll be old, and you'll need your money, because you'll be too old to work! Being old and poor is not what you want to be. This is serious stuff I'm telling you, Joey! Remember these things, son. They will step you well, in life."

I had to ask the commander to explain what bankruptcy meant, and about what he meant about

the government covering or insuring the bank holdings. The rest I understood. I'd definitely seen the nesting instinct in Mom. He said that the FDIC was created in 1933, just to convince people into believing that they could again trust the banks, after they stole people's money during the depression, but in reality the FDIC was just a psychological bluff. All his teachings were indeed thought provoking; though I never found economics to be as interesting as medicine… making money versus the preservation of life… a pebble to Mount Everest. In England, doctors aren't paid big salaries, and yet they receive tremendous respect, and they are satisfyingly rewarded by the good they do. Each three pounds of gray mush has its' favorite rewards.

It was Franklin D. Roosevelt, who after the depression, was uncertain about trusting the banks. When he signed for the establishment of the FDIC, he said, "We do not wish to make the United States Government liable for the mistakes and errors (greed and thrivings) of individual banks, and put a premium on unsound banking in the future." However, that's pretty much what he did, and then later, with the help of George Bush Junior, the banks ripped off $750B from the government, along with immeasurable amounts of real estate (repossessed homes, etc.). The homeless population spiked. Had the old Jewish commander still been around he'd

have simply said,

"You see what I'm talking about, Joey. Those things are not rocket science, they simply prove that greed and the ability to steal exist at all levels."

The old Jewish commander explained that bankruptcy was originally designed to give people and companies a second chance, but that many corporations quickly learned to regularly bastardize that economic lifesaver as a license to steal their employees' pensions, to hide profits, and to avoid paying taxes. Radio talk shows which advise people on how to save money and payoff their debts, are forever making the average Joe think that to declare bankruptcy is to admit failure, if it's not actually sinful; yet, they never condemn corporations which do so.

Trump, who is currently running for president, repeated used the bankruptcy laws, and is rumored to have taken his employee's pensions in the process. The old Jewish commander didn't approve of my 'wasting' money, by shooting clay pigeons at the shooting range. He often lectured me about it, in fact every time I went to sell him coins, he'd bring-up the topic. In order to maintain harmony, I frequently lied

to him about how often I went shooting. Consequently, I realized that he had to have been an over-the-top control-freak, with his own son. Ninety percent of what he talked about related to money, but I only saw him once a week to show him the coins, but the visits usually lasted around thirty minutes. When no one else was around, we'd sit at his cheap kitchen table, and drink orange juice.

A couple of the first phrases a baby learns to say is, "I want," and "Give me,"… selfish words. Watch any video of a politician, and you can still see that selfish baby.

Raising Your Elected Officials by Moe R. Wiley

There were several ways, I found to make money, and in so doing, I learned to stash away considerable sums, which I later covertly brought back to the United States. Following the old Jew's advice, I kept Mom and Dad in the dark. During the three years in Spain, I managed to buy two shotguns. One, I kept at the base shooting club, and sold for a deceit profit, the other gun I brought back to the US. At one point, I told Dad that I was going to start

buying guns off the base, and selling them at the shooting range. However, he forbade me, claiming that there were too many political liabilities for him, if something went wrong, involving me selling weapons. When we finally got ready to leave Spain, I had converted my saved cash into only large bills, rolled them into tight rolls, and I forced them down both barrels of the *Browning* double barrel. Using a gun cleaning rod, I stuffed some torn pieces of dark colored t-shirt tightly in both ends of both barrels, on either side of the cash rolls, to hold them in tight, and to better hide them. Should someone have happened to glance down the barrels, all they'd have seen was black t-shirt material.

The gun, containing the rolls of cash stuffed down its barrels, went out in the last shipment of our household goods, to the states. Sadly, the first shipment, which contained ninety percent of our family's possessions, burned in a warehouse fire in Alexandria, Virginia, before it could be delivered to our newly rented home. Most of the nice things my folks had carefully collected throughout Europe, Asia, and North Africa were forever lost to the flames. With the loss of her valuable household mementos, Mom was devastated! When the nest

burns, it lays waste to the soul of the mother bird. Because of the old Jew's preaching, even today, I still have some of that original cash, I'd earned in Spain as a child, back in the late 1950s.

At first, I shot both skeet and trap, but being a skinny child, I preferred trap, since you didn't have to swept the heavy shotgun from side to side, as when shooting skeet. There was something magical about learning to focus all your attention, and motor control, on a fast moving object, which culminated in it exploding into pieces. It was as if my power had been extended beyond my mere anatomy. Trap shooting supposedly began around 1750 in England, where the targets were live birds, released from beneath hats, just laying on the ground. Then, around 1860, the live birds were replaced with hand-thrown glass globes, and finally around 1880, along came the well known saucer-shaped clay disks, the so called 'clay pigeons,' that are still used today. The story goes, that supposedly some guy saw a person skipping clam shells across the surface of some body of water, ergo he came-up with the idea of the making the small saucer-like clay pigeons.

One day someone will probably invent a highly maneuverable, flying target drone, for private use.

The airborne drone will position itself at various distances from the shooter, and fly at various speeds, while changing directions. The device will be completely autonomous, randomly selecting challenging flight parameters, in accordance with the shooter's abilities. As the shooter improves so will the evasiveness of the drone. Perhaps, the corresponding gun will fire a simple harmless laser burst, and the drone senses the in-coming light. If there's a hit, the drone might emit a beeping sound and maybe it flashes some lights, thereby rewarding the shooter. But what of the deafening sound, the smell of the burned cordite, the violent recoil into ones' shoulder, the ritualistic cleaning of the weapon, etc.? Time marches on.

After one year of near daily practice, by the age of twelve, I barely qualified to shoot the high speed Olympic trap, in the European men's championship, held at the shooting range on the Navy base in Rota, Spain. Mind you, this shooting event had nothing to do with the Olympics. Olympic trap was just a type of trap, where the clay pigeon traveled around 90 to 100 mph. Compared to the other competitors, I didn't shoot too well, but after all, I was the only kid. However, because of that event, I was able to watch

the performance of many of Europe's top shooters. Some were nothing short of amazing; so good, they seemed almost super-human, better than I'd imagined a shooter could be… lightning fast reflexes. Several of the shooters carried drinking flasks, to slow them down a bit, but none were drunks. As best I recall, all the best shooters drank alcohol, while shooting.

The shotgun I used was the hand-made *Browning* over-and-under twelve gauge, the popular lightning model. The Jewish commander had deemed the gun to be a poor investment. It might have been the only thing he was wrong about. The weapon came with a gold trigger, modified and full chokes, and so presented a tighter pattern of shot, meaning the lead shot was not as spread-out. Consequently, it wasn't designed for trap shooting *per se*, nor for skeet; but still, it was an excellent weapon; especially, since it forced me to be more accurate, with its' tighter chokes. It was the same gun I'd periodically stick in my mouth to try to kill myself, due to the severe depression, which accompanied my recovery from alcohol.

That depression was the blackest feeling imaginable. A suicidal life is worse than miserable.

The misery lasted from right before age thirteen, until half way through my sixteenth year, then the depression just somehow faded away. Those were horrible years, but the first year was by far the worst. Later in life, I'd be confronted with what seemed to be imminent death, and that would be scary; yet still, that was nothing compared to my youthful post-alcohol depression. Thank God, I lacked the guts to put more pressure on that gilded trigger. With the gun's muzzle in my mouth, and my left hand gripping the barrels, I'd reach down and touch the pad of my right thumb to that cold golden trigger, and gently push. It was harder to sense the pressure on the trigger, with my thumb, than with my index finger. As the trigger slightly depressed the pad of my thumb, a sweat would pop out of my skin. *You didn't have the guts to warn the guys in the yellow car, and you can't kill yourself.* That brief rush of fear and perspiration would momentarily end my depression. For a few hours after the close call, oddly enough, I'd feel better. Don't let anyone tell you that killing yourself is the coward's way out. Strangely, after removing the gun from between my teeth, I'd unload it, and clean the two barrels, so that it wouldn't rust form the moisture of my mouth and breath. To say the least, alcohol withdrawals are a morbid bitch,

which forced me to take the measure of the abyss.

In spite of the fact that many authors have tried to write about that condition, words can't begin to describe post-withdrawal depression; but, what else could make a kid, with no apparent worries, want to blow his head off? What else could make him regret being alive, and sorry about waking-up each morning? As soon as I'd awaken, tears would stream from my eyes, as the sinking feeling of depression would take hold. For a long time, I'd just lay paralyzed by dread, trying to get my shit together, so I could go eat breakfast with my folks, without them seeing my tears. Often at school, I'd go sit on the toilet in the hall bathroom, so that no one could see me crying, then I'd wait a bit for the telltale puffiness to leave my eyes. Returning to the classroom, I'd avoid making eye contract.

Physical withdrawals are simply that… physical, unless you include brain chemistry. They lasted about two days, with the corresponding muscle cramps, chills, shivering, one or two nights without any sleep, and periodically throwing up. However, the next four years of depression was the real bitch! The physical withdrawals were sort of like having a severe case of the flu, with some depression and a

few bad hallucinations thrown in. Some of the hallucinations were various types of spiders, on my skin, but since I normally hallucinated, I knew the spiders weren't real. Another of the hallucinations was, that I was buried, under a heap of poisonous lizards, but that didn't really bother me, for again, I realized they weren't real. With the exception of the withdrawals and one other hallucination, almost all my hallucinations have been pleasant, and have provided me some measure of escape.

What ended my childhood alcoholism and started the withdrawals was my parents' decision to go on a car trip. That trip occurred near the end of Dad's assignment in Europe. They had decided to manage my withdrawals that way, so that the people on the base wouldn't realize I was addicted to alcohol. Moreover, on the trip, I no longer had access to liquor, and I was constantly with my parents, so there was no way for me to sneak a drink. The withdrawal symptoms didn't start until late in the second day of abstinence. A lot of alcoholics will say, "I don't have a drinking problem. I didn't drink anything yesterday, and I was fine." But tell them to give it up for a week, and then checkout their response. "I could if I wanted, but I don't really want

to, and there's no reason for me to do that. I simply enjoy the occasional drink."

During that miserable trip through Europe, Mom mandated that there'd be no drinking, not even wine or beer. But, Dad did have a few beers, when we were in Germany. After we got home, Dad borrowed a truck from a squadron, and transported all the cases of liquor to a chickenwire lock-up inside one of the squadron hangers. That was about the same time that my relationship with a beautiful Spanish prostitute ended (soon to be discussed; herein). She had to leave, because her mother was dying in Valencia, on the beautiful east coast of Spain. Her leaving, and the end to our relation, probably also contributed to my depression. I'd grown more than accustomed to spending one day per week with her.

After my physical detox, every drop of joy was wrung-out of me. The only part of my brain still functioning was the essence of hopelessness. The mind-blowing withdrawal hit hard, when we were just south of Paris. Perchance, both Mom and Dad knew what was happening to me, but denied it in my presence, and didn't want to discuss it with me. In those days, most people, including my Mom and Dad, thought that withdrawals were only the few days of

physical withdrawals. I don't think they considered the years of depression, which followed. Periodically, Dad would pull the car off the side of the road, so that I could puke or use the bathroom. Then, I'd get back in the car, and just lay on the plastic covered back seat. The only nice things about those withdrawals were the weather, the backseat, and Mom, wiping my face with a cold wet towel.

"You've just got the flu, Joey. If you need to throw-up, just tell us, and Dad will pull over, but don't throw-up in the car! Get some ice out of the ice chest {We were traveling in. a station-wagon with an old metal cooler in the back.} and rub it on your face and forehead. If you get chilled just wrap this blanket around you. Don't worry, you'll be feeling better soon. The flu will only last a couple days, then you'll be fine.. you'll see. Don't worry, Joey." Mom counseled, and Dad nodded his affirmation.

I guess Mom knew that I'd survive the withdrawals, since I was a healthy kid of twelve. Some part of me knew that alcohol withdrawals were the true reason for the trip and my illness. The trip-withdrawals was probably so no one, on the base, could bare-witness to my detox, ergo no embarrassment for Mom and Dad. A few times in

adult life, I have been faced with death, usually because of my own idiocy, but those events were nothing compared to the ass-kicking four years of depression, after stopping the booze. Mom loved the extended car trip through Europe, with all the usual tourists stops: Madrid, Paris, London, Amsterdam, Munich, Vienna, Rome, etc. She marveled at art and historical things, and which Dad just seemed to tolerate, while I just remained depressed. For me, the trip was an absolute nightmare. In fact, most nightmares are more pleasant, than the withdrawals and the protracted depression.

Perhaps, the only good thing about suicidal depression is that it makes a boring life seem blissful.

A Worthwhile Breath by Mosley R. Williams

Before the withdrawals, I'd been drinking, since I was roughly six months old, except for the one break when Dad had been in Korea. Though it's all a little foggy, I believe that I switched from beer to liquor around age three, about the time I began to assume the role of bartender for my parent's squadron parties. It was also the time that Dad switched over

from beer to hard liquor. The wars had taken their toll on Dad. Post-war, and with his promotions, his work had become even more stressful and time consuming. When he'd get home at night, he didn't want to wait for the beer to slowly kick-in. Instead, he'd head straight to the liquor cabinet, pour and slam-down a shot, then he'd pour a second shot to sip. Once he was seated and sipping, I'd pour mine. In total, Dad would usually drink around five shots through the evening, I'd drink two, but then steal one or two more after my parents had gone to sleep, to help me sleep. Dad seemed to enjoy my company as a fellow drinker, and I certainly enjoyed his. While he wouldn't talk about the war, he loved to talk about planes and flying, and I loved to listen. Listening to Dad talk about aviation was an engrossing vicarious experience. Each time he'd describe an engine failure, and electrical problem, a tough cross-wind landing, a landing gear failure, etc., I'd hang on each and every word. There was never any emotion in his descriptions, just the facts, but that was more than enough. Mom's comments were never as interesting.

In those days, aside from their planes and flying careers, military pilots seemed to pretty much live

for sex and booze. The military now frowns on drinking pilots. It seems that pilot candidates are now selected more for academic prowess. During my years of drinking, with all the pilots, their wives and girlfriends, dropping-by the house, I knew more about mixing drinks, than I can now remember. The pilots pretty much stuck to different straight liquors, with maybe a chaser. Their wives and girlfriends tended to drink the fancier more difficult sweet drinks. Besides Dad, one other thing which really got me drinking the hard stuff was taste testing the party drinks. Almost every weekend, I'd get smashed at a party, for if there wasn't a party at our house, there was one somewhere in the neighborhood. At first, the whiskeys tasted bitter, and sort of choked me, making it hard to take a breathe, but over a few months, my tastebuds morphed into perceiving of whiskey as being sweet, and not too different in taste from *Coke-a-Cola*. To the best of my knowledge, I'm the only person, who thinks whiskey taste sweet. Most likely, my physical addiction started about the time that whiskey began to taste good.

As a little child of three or four, about once a week, Mom, Dad, and I would go out to eat. It was generally at the Navy's O-club, or some bar-

restaurant. Dad would order me a seven-up or ginger ale, into which he'd pour some of his bourbon or scotch. If it was a civilian restaurant, he'd also give me a pocket full of nickels, many of which were buffalo heads, back then. The buffalo nickels with the Indian on the obverse made me think that white Americans held the Native Americans in high regard, ergo later, I was shocked when finding-out the actual truth. With drink in hand, and a pocket full of nickels, I'd head off to the lobby to pay the slot machines and drink, until the waiter brought the food.

For me, the old Native American Indian on one side (heads) with the standing bull buffalo on the other (tails), looked ever so much more regale, than most other US coin ever minted, except for perhaps the Morgan silver dollar, and the St. Gaudens gold piece. It wasn't till years later, I'd find out about what we'd done to the Indians and the buffalo. The US government very nearly wiped both off the planet. I think that the Native American classic cultures are now largely extinct. Sure there are a few, who live in the old ways. But only a few. Years ago, there were about 350 different Native American languages; now, there are only 150, and just about

340,000 skilled and semiskilled speakers, but just a minor fraction of them still practice their culture.

While many things may contribute to the disappearance of a language, one thing remains certain: when the last fluent native speaker dies, the cultural heritage of those people disappears, as well. The only remnant of said culture will be pieces of their DNA scattered in the mixed offspring. The situation which resulted in the disappearance of languages indigenous to the North American continent, following the arrival of Europeans, was cultural genocide. Each language to some degree embodies the various systems (social, political, familial, religious, endeavors, etc.) of its culture. Perhaps, one reason the Indian culture has almost disappeared is that very little of it made it into written words, and the US government slaughtered so many people, so fast, that there wasn't the time taken to create a descent written history. Early white peoples' writings about the Native Americans was often little more than confabulations for shock value.

On the other hand, you might want to check-out the book, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,* by Dee Brown. Brown covers much of the history of the relationship between the American Indian and the US

Government. It's a long (somewhat drawn-out) tale of the United States betraying, murdering, and displacing, the Native Americans. The text chronicles a deliberate series of grisly events, designed to destroy them, as well as their culture and their very way of life. Someone once told me that the Native Americans have been fighting terrorism, since 1492.

It is indeed fortunate, that I was not born a Native American. By the same token, what does that statement say about me, a white United States military man?

Till The End of 1870 by General Willard R. Moyes

The world and its money have markedly changed, since when I was a child, when a silver dollar (as well as the half dollars, quarters, and dimes) was 90 percent silver, and pennies were 95 percent copper. America's coins are now made of worthless junk metal. In effect, they might as well be plastic. No more gold, silver, or copper for the general populace, just valueless pot-metal coins, and paper play money, which is not backed by anything.

My bet is that soon American citizens will become corporate slaves, in an even more literal sense, than they currently are. Even so, I can't understand why gold, silver, and copper are perceived as being valuable. I suppose genuine value involves things such as: love, friendship, health, a clean planet (air, water, earth), food, medicine, and the time to enjoy life.

Eventually, the ultra rich may have everyone working for credit or for room, board, electricity, water, and medicine. Those who dare to protest will be: doing some menial job for some major corporation, while living in a tiny cell with a thin lumpy mattress, eating retchid food, receiving little very little medical care, while surrounded by unsavory folks. That's probably one reason why the United States is building so many prisons, so fast. Lots of prisons also tends to keep down the minority vote. Currently, the United States locks-up more people per capita, than does any other country on earth! We are number one in prisoners per capita, not: Yemen, Somalia, Russia, China, Mexico, Cuba, Iran, Syria, etc.! America… the nation of prisons! Perhaps, many Americans just have a criminal nature, or could there be another reason for there

being so many incarcerated Americans? It bares repeating that the US locks-up more of its citizens than any other country! We're less than five percent of the world's population, but we have over twenty-seven percent of the world's prisoners! Blacks make-up about 17 percent of the US population, but are 34-38 percent of the prison populations, which pointedly means they don't get to vote; nor can they easily procreate while incarcerated. Only California, Washington, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Mexico, and New York allow conjugal visits, but very infrequently.

Think about the fact that currently our money has absolutely no intrinsic value. Doesn't our government think we're worth it? Even if you buy some precious metals, you'll generally have to pay extra for the 'purchasing privilege.' Just go to a coin store, a gold/silver exchange, or a metals business and try to buy silver or gold, and it's going to cost you a certain extra percentage, above spot. And, there are a ton of tricks and pitfalls to the buying and selling of precious metals. Just go online, and first check the spot price of gold for one ounce; then, look at what you can buy that ounce of pure 24 karat gold for. Generally, you're going to pay at least three or

four percent above the spot price. And, if you go to sell it, you probably won't get spot-price, unless a private individual wants to buy it from you, but they're often nervous about doing that, for fear of the gold being counterfeit.

What also shocks me, is how much money you'll pay just to exchange one country's currency for another's. Such exchange practices are really nothing more than a legalized criminal money-grab, legalized theft, but what's even more foolish is that people actually pay it, as if, it somehow makes sense. You are paying money to buy money! Just try to change your dollars into euros at your local bank, and watch how much money you'll lose in that transaction! As a child in Spain, no banking institution would have dreamed of charging their customer to buy or sell foreign currencies, but people are now like sheep! If you decide to go to Europe, don't buy euros from your American bank. When you get there, often the stores and restaurants will take the American dollars, or credit cards, or sometimes you can go to the European banks to buy euros and get a better rate than in the US.

Now, the US banks tell you that they only charge ten dollars to convert dollars to euros. That is such a

lie! Considering the actual international values, they will have gouged you anywhere from eight to twelve percent (sometimes more), and called it, the 'normal' exchange fee. If you buy ten thousand dollars worth of euros you usually lose $800 to $1000! What stupid bullshit! All it means is that certain companies make huge profits, for doing virtually nothing, and those companies pay their respective governments for the privilege. So in effect, it's just another form of theft-by-government, and theft-by-your-bank. It's nothing less than stealing! It's something my old friend, the aforementioned old Jewish commander, would have raised holy hell about.

Why should people be forced to pay extra to buy euros, rubles, pounds, yuans, etc.? Currency exchanges are just one more government sanctioned means of pilfering wealth. The saddest thing about it is that hardly anyone complains! You'd think that the European Union would want to sell you euros at cost, simply to encourage you to come to Europe and buy spend, to help stimulate their economy. When traveling, you'll often see currency desks, sitting out in plain view in airport lobbies. If you decide to exchange your money with them, you most likely will get royally screwed. Their signs say things lie: no

fee, no commission, lowest rates, etc. Such claims are simply BS. Those lies are to keep you from focusing on the actual rate of exchange. Usually, there are two types of rate: bank and commercial, which can vary significantly. Airport exchange desks are a real nightmare.

When I was a child, and my parents and I traveled around Europe, we didn't have to pay a premium to exchange currencies. The average person only thinks about currency exchange once in a blue moon, usually only when he or she is on an overseas vacation, or perhaps when thinking about buying a condo in some faraway land. For many people, the currency exchange is the most damaging aspect of the trip or purchase. As well as, small companies that operate overseas, get shafted by exchange rates, especially when the rates are volatile. On the other hand, large corporations find ways around this dilemma by using trade goods as payment, in their contractual agreements, but individuals have no choice but to lose their hard-earned money in the shady government-controlled currency exchanges. As always, it's the little guy who gets screwed. It's really not any different, than you going to your local bank and handing the teller a one hundred dollar bill, and

asking for change, but the teller only hands to four twenties and a ten.

http://www.budgettravel.com/feature/what-your-bank-wont-tell-you-about-currency-conver,5437/

Though I was addicted to alcohol for roughly twelve years, in one respect, I am not a true alcoholic. In other words, I don't have the addiction gene, and can now drink small amounts of alcohol, without fear of alcoholism. Already, I can hear you screaming, "Bullshit! Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic!" Yet the truth is that I 'was' an alcoholic… passed tense! Probably because of the years of depression, which I still associate with the stuff, I have no real desire for it, and oddly no craving. If I drink, it's only to be sociable. The dopamine levels in my brain are still high enough that I don't crave. A few times in my life, I would again engage in a fair amount of drinking, but still I don't have the desire to continue to drink. As a child, I think I mainly drank to socialize with my Dad, and to get to sleep at night, and that's why every night for many years on, I've taken a prescription sleeping pill to get to

dreamland. Alcohol will no longer help me to sleep.

As counter productive as this may seem, as a teenager I'd drink a little booze, along with smoking a little weed, before engaging in car racing, and not drag racing. I drove better in the chemically-enhanced state. I also shot pool better that way. I've played in few tournaments, and always shot better when slightly loaded. Since during the first twelve years of my life, I was a drinker, I came to function better, when moderately under the influence. In a roundabout way, that makes sense.

Frequently, I'll now attend a social event and might be given a drink or a beer. I'll take a few swallows to be congenial, then when no one is looking, I'll pour it out, without the slightest desire to drink more. Like I said, I don't have that nefarious addiction gene, and still have enough dopamine in my brain that I don't yearn for the booze; but remember, that my neurochemistry evolved on alcohol. Nevertheless, I was an addict, simply because I drank every day, at a very young age, and so I had to go through withdrawals. While I probably don't have the addiction gene, I undoubtedly have more than a few other, more questionable ones. My bet is that the addiction gene isn't completely bad,

since addicts tend to be smarter (although there are still dumb ones), and clearly tend to have more dynamic personalities, regardless if they're principled.

Early one balmy summer morning, under a cloudless light blue dome, I was walking across a dry dusty field, about two or three miles off the base, bird hunting with another American kid, about my age, who I'd meant only an hour earlier, at the base shooting club. The trap and skeet ranges were all booked-up, so the only way to shoot was to do some illegal bird hunting off the base. Occasionally, I'd pluck and clean the birds, skewer them on a thin make-shift greenwood stick, then slowly roast them over a fire. You may not believe this, but wild birds are far more flavorful, than any store-bought chicken, its like comparing a Ferrari to a model-T.

There was no place to hunt on the base, without getting in trouble, so my new acquaintance and I climbed over the chain-linked perimeter fence, and were on some Spanish farmer's dry dusty land. We'd used twine to make our shotgun slings. I'd knot one end through the ventilated rib on the barrel, and tightly affix the other end to the grip of the stock. Getting over the fence with the gun was fairly easy;

you just had to make double sure the guns were unloaded; then, I'd tie a long piece of twine to the gun, and climb to the top of the fence, holding onto the end of the twine, then I'd pull each gun up, one at a time, lower each down, in such a manner that each was on the ground but propped-up against the fence. Once we were on the other side of the fence, I'd carefully untie and roll-up the twine into a ball, and put it in my pocket, till it was time to return back over the fence and onto the base.

My brand new friend and I were both using double barreled 12 gauges, and we wore two leather ammo belts, over our shoulders, crisscrossing our boney twelve year-old chests. The air was unpolluted, and the sky then seemed to inspire a greater feeling of depth, or perchance this perception was owing to my youthful eyes.

Because we were bird hunting, we were using low powered cartridges, loaded with a reduced amount of black powder and the birdshot, number seven BB shot. This shot is about half the size of the conventional copper BB, used in a kid's BB gun. Since the bird hunting cartridges were low power, the outsides of the shell, only had a quarter inch high brass rim, extending up from the cartridge base, ergo

the majority of the cartridge's cylindrical siding was made of a waxy waterproof cardboard, usually red in color. Still, if a person were shot at close range by one of those cartridges, it could easily blow a large hole through them.

More potent shells, with much greater amounts of gunpowder, had sides made completely of shiny brass, without any cardboard. These powerful shells also contained the larger more damaging buckshot, or they held a single very large solid lead bullet (.72 caliber), called a 'slug.' The solid brass shells were used for big game: bear, deer, moose, wild hog, etc., and were definitely not designed to hunt frail little birds. Such a 12 gauge slug, to the head of a charging bull rhino, could likely drop him in his tracks. As a result, the solid brass shells stayed in our ammo belts, that day. There wasn't any reason to take them out, when bird hunting. The only reason we had those formidable brass cartridges, was that we liked to stand at a far distance, about a quarter to a half mile, from a large pond or river, elevate the gun barrel, and fire, to see the slug or buck-shot splash into the distant water. As a child, to see one's influence projected over a great distance, held a certain fascination. The lightweight birdshot didn't

have that range.

After a couple of hours of walking the endless dry dusty fields with just a few scattered bushes, we'd each bagged a few birds, which we had attached to a cord or stringer tied to our belts, much like a fisherman will carry a stringer of fish. When I'd get home that day, and out of sight of Mom or Dad, I'd sneak the game birds, which I hadn't field-cooked and eaten, into the saddle bags of our gardener's motorcycle, before he'd head to his home. Wild birds have little meat, and require a bit more work to eat, but the taste is well worth the trouble. The favor of wild bird is filled with a myriad of wonderful tastes, nothing like the bland taste that commercially raised fowl. I've always assumed the multitude of tastes of the wild bird were owing to the fact that it consumes a great variety of bugs, worms, and seeds, and not just a few cheap grains. And don't be fooled, usually free range chicken is nothing like wild bird, either. Still, being a fairly impatient kid, I often found cooking to be too time consuming, and food has never been a top priority for me. One of the coolest things about taste is that some people have cells on their tongue, which release digestive enzymes, and therefore, their tongues are better adept at tasting

what they chew, but I'm not one of those folks.

http://www.upc-online.org/freerange.html

The two of us were standing up on a low long sloping hill, out in the middle of a vast expanse of featureless fields, with only the occasional clump of brush, or sporadic patch of dead dry grass. Not a soul was in sight, for as far as the eye could see. The only movement was the occasional dust cloud getting wiped-up off the dry land. He and I were the only beings on the wide-open plains, under a vast continuous robin's egg dome. For a moment, I got the heady allusion we were the last two beings on earth.

Upon meeting him, I thought how similar we were, both: skinny twelve year olds, Navy brats, and both enjoyed shooting. Standing out in the plains of Spain, with the expansive sky, it seemed like we were literally on another planet. The childhood imagination, while often overly fertile, is so rarely cultivated. Schools don't have classes designed to groom the imagination, to foster creativity. Why not have creative writing, or creative thought/problem solving classes, in elementary, middle, and high

school? While we're speculating about education, obviously foreign language classes, should be initiated early, in kindergarten, or even before.

The only man-made structure on that dusty plain was a one room broken-down abandon shack just a few yards in front of us. We'd been walking, separated by about forty yards, and both had been headed toward said shack for the last twenty minutes. The ancient shambles of a house was about half the size of a shipping container, right out in the middle of the dry sun-baked land. It had once been painted white, but ninety percent of the paint had long vanished, in the wind.

Who'd build this little house so far from any road? Looking to the right, I noticed that my new acquaintance had broken-open his double barrel, and was extracting the unfired waxy red cardboard shells of birdshot. He then returned them to empty leather loops of his ammo belt, and so, I assumed that he was done hunting for the day, and wanted to return to the base, with his gun safely unloaded. But then, disturbingly I saw him extract two of the solid brass cartridges from the ammo belt, and quickly pop them in his weapon, then he snapped it closed! Instantly, the paranoid alarm went off in my head. I realized

that he'd loaded the powerful big game shells, and I seemed to be the only thing in the region, which remotely resembled big game, worse yet there was no pond or river, in sight.

Worse yet, I'd only just met him, minutes ago, and so had no clue about his personality. For all I knew, he could have been a certified sadistic juvenile serial killer, and I definitely had sensed something sinister in him. It dawned on me that the unknown kid could shoot me and bury me out in the dusty field, or drag my dead body into that rickety abandoned shack, with no one ever being the wiser. Not a single person was visible for 360 degrees. Initially, I had thought that I was just being paranoid, but a few times I'd fished those colder deep waters enough to know that the pleasures of psychopathology existed, ergo there could have been a monster strolling the corridors of his youthful limbic mush.

To make matters worse, when the kid loaded the powerful brass shells, his lips pulled back like tight rubber-bands, forming a menacing grin, which seemed to naturally fit his small hard mouth. His eyes lacked a smile to match his halloween grin, nor did he make eye contact with me. The hairs on my

skin stood at attention. *Holy shit! What's this guy up to?* His switching to the solid brass shells had made me more than a little tense, so without looking directly at him, I quickly edged within twenty feet of him, since at close range, the birdshot in my gun would be just as deadly as the heavier buckshot in his. Had I tried to distance myself, my weapon would have become less effective, while his would still have been lethal. I also allowed the muzzle of my gun to drift ever so slightly in his direction, without actually pointing the gun at him. If I had to shoot him, every fraction of a second would count, and I could kill him quicker, if my gun was already pointed a few degrees in his direction. He didn't seem to notice my precautionary indiscretion.

Tightening my grip on the weapon, I programmed myself to block out any misgivings or hesitation about killing him. *Just fire both barrels into his center mass, fast as I accurately can, then reload, just incase.* It was clear that things were fast being like Dad always said; some people need killing. While I then had no significant conscience, I did have some a smidgen of empathy, but I more than had the ability to switch it off, and that's what I did that afternoon. To this day, I'm convinced that the kid

was a full fledged psychopath, and after you read what was about to happen, you might agree.

In the years since that day, I've read several research articles dealing with psychopathology. Numerous supposed experts agree that many psychopaths are genetically predisposed. That doesn't mean that behavioral things don't play a role for they do indeed, but possibly behavioral factors in many are not the primary causative factor. If psychopathology is in the genes, psychopaths are not just bad to the bone, but bad down to the 46 monstrously long nucleotide sequences. Some people can practice the piano their whole life and remain mediocre, then some child play for two or three years and turns out to be a prodigy. We do have so much DNA. The average cell has about nine meters of DNA, which is only about 20 angstrom units wide. There are about 100,000,000,000 angstrom units per meter, hence about 900,000,000,000 for nine meters. So if DNA were a data tape one inch wide, it would be about long 45 billion inches, or over 70,000 miles long. That's long enough to hold some serious data, written in the selfish genetic tetralogy code. Some folks believe that much of the *DNA* is not used, but in an evolutionary since, that doesn't seem reasonable,

ergo I've wondered if what some folks think of as unused DNA isn't involved in the production of the many and varied antibodies.

If scientific evidence were to show that psychopathology is primarily a product of genes, and that was somehow to get out into public knowledge, it might be used in court, as a legal defense. It might also be somehow used to influence mating pairs. What if a simple blood test could pinpoint potential psychopaths? Who do you think might fear such a test? Perhaps certain of the: politicians, military leaders, police, CEOs of the military industrial complex, leaders in US intelligence agencies, big Pharma's CEOs, big oil's CEOs, power company CEOs, etc., might be hesitant to take the test. The MAOA gene may well be that psychopathic gene. The scientist, who discovered it, has the gene, and may have suspicioned that he did. I'm better than 50-50 about whether I've got it.

"Your honor and good people of the jury, my client is not responsible for killing those people. His DNA analysis clearly shows that he has the MAOA gene, and so…." So might a defense attorney proceed.

http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-neuroscientist-who-discovered-he-was-a-psychopath-180947814/?no-ist

That day in the barren fields of southern Spain, all my attention remained focused on the movements of that boy's weapon. If it had suddenly begun to swing in my direction, I'd have shot him, and worried about it afterwards. Like the old guard, who shot the two Spanish teenagers, I'd made the decision to kill him, if need be. It was a no brainer. I either shot him, or I'd be shot; no decision could have been simpler. Killing requires that one be ruthless, without hesitation, without remorse, nothing to slow down one's reaction time.

Had I tried to reload my gun with the solid brass shells, there would be a few seconds, where I would have been completely defenseless. I was no longer looking to flush-out a bird and clearly neither was he, since what he had just loaded into his gun was useless for birds. At that moment, everything seemed so clear, so alive; it felt amazing. I was riveted to every nuance of his movement. All the while, I tried to affect that I wasn't the slightest bit concerned. While I knew that he had no reason to kill me, there

was no other explanation for his loading the solid brass big game shells. *Neither did the guards need to kill those two teenagers in the little yellow car, that day*. To remain safe, I stayed alert, and close to him.

It crossed my mind, that when I shot him, I'd have to explain things to Dad, and that would mean admitting that I'd left the base. Then it dawned on me that my birdshot wasn't traceable, and so when I killed him, people might actually not have to know. The ammo, I was using, was commonly sold all over southern Spain, and I'd take the empty cartridges with me, to be safely disposed of them. Next, I thought about the fact that there didn't appear to be any witnesses, so I could just drag his body into the old abandoned shack, and sweep-away my tracks with some brush, as I retreated, along the same route we'd taken. Besides, if they didn't find him for a while, the winds and rain would remove all tracks. *It might be months before someone shows-up, at this abandoned shack.* It seemed like a better idea to conceal his killing, than to explain why I killed him. *Dad, always says that secrets empower you.* After all, who was going to believe that he had tried to kill me, without a motive? *Grandpa would say don't get caught.* Luckily, when I'd been shooting the birds, on the way

out there, I'd pocketed all my empty shell casings, to give them to the Navy chief, who ran the shooting range, to reload them, so there'd be no empty waxy casings with my finger prints to be found. As an added precaution, I figured that I'd bury my shoes in the woods, so they couldn't be matched, if I missed sweeping away any foot prints. I'd go back to the club, shoot a round of trap, clean my gun and leave it in one of the gun racks, inside the club. Lastly, before going home, I'd go swimming, come home wet, and tell Mom that someone must have stolen my shoes, while I was out swimming.

To save time, I'd programmed myself to shoot from the hip and not waste time bringing the gun to my shoulder. At that close distance, I didn't need the more accurate shoulder aim. My focus remained fixed on his movements. While I wanted to ask him why he'd loaded the solid brass shells, I feared that the question might provoke him into action, and I fantasized the conversation.

"Why'd you put those brass shells in your gun?" I'd foolishly ask.

BLAM!...

"To better kill you with, you dead fool!" Hypothetically, he'd respond.

There was a large paranoid part of me ready to kill, and I was comfortable with doing so. The idea of killing didn't bother me; it was something that just had to be done, if the need arose. Many years later, I'd experience this mindset a few times more, twice while stoned, on different nights in Mexico City, and a couple of times, then about thirty-five years after that in Mobile.

He'll be an easier target, than the fast flying little birds. All Dad's lectures about killing had come flooding back to me. Then, I began to think. *Why should I wait for him to make the first move? Why not kill him, now?* If I waited, and he was fast enough, I might die, or we both might be killed. Well trained twelve year olds can be extremely fast. After all, there was no other reason for his loading the solid brass shells, other than for him to kill me, so I nudged the muzzle of my gun a few more degrees in his direction. *Shoot halfway between his heart and his bellybutton.*

Continuing to walk forward, he edged in front of me, as we walked around the end of the ramshackle shack; and there to my surprise, just on the other side of the dilapidated homestead, stood an aged broken-down, boney, black stallion. I hadn't been

able to see the emaciated horse, until that very instant. The rundown house had been blocking my view but not my new friend's. He'd been able to see the living skeleton of an old ebony stud. The horse was heavily coated in the dry powdery dirt of the surrounding earth. *I've never seen a horse so dusty and emaciated!* Horses often love to roll in dusty dirt, maybe they're using ground as an itching post, or perchance, the dust acts as a barrier against insects; or perhaps, its just for their back and joint health, as if the earth and their own body weight becomes their personal chiropractor. Maybe, it's just fun for the horse. Who knows? One thing for sure is that all animal behavior is well founded in DNA.

Each protruding rib of the pathetic gaunt beast, bore testament to the complete lack of green grass. The horse was munching on pieces of dry brown nutrition-less grass. The ancient chewing stallion paid us no mind, but continued to grind on what was left of his old molars, while he switched his thinning tail. As we walked closer, my bird-hunting acquaintance casually stepped up to the side of the boney beast, and without the slightest pause, shouldered his powerful weapon, and rapidly emptied both barrels into the animal's ribcage. The

two shots were delivered so rapidly they almost sounded as one, the double recoil knocking the skinny boy backwards. The double shot had to have severely punished his shoulder.

Because I had programed myself to shoot the kid, the surprise of his gun discharging caused me to reflexively swing the barrel directly at him, still I withheld pulling the trigger, realizing he never intended to shoot me, then I just took a deep breath. The kid had been intent on executing the gaunt ancient horse, so he never noticed my reflectively aiming at him. My eyes then tracked to the horse, as my finger came up off the trigger, and I began elevating the gun.

The force of the near simultaneous blasts, knocked the dusty rawboned horse sideways, sending it over onto its right side. Down the old horse went with the few pieces of the dry lifeless grass, haphazardly sticking out of his firmly clenched yellow teeth. The horse's eyes went wide, but probably were no longer seeing, and his boney legs instantly extended to become rigidly straight. A whining grunt escaped its lifeless mouth, as the aged equine titled over to his right and solidly impacted the ground. The horse had gone down like a felled

tree, and loudly bounced on the dusty ground, and its' tail no longer flicking at flies, even though more flies soon arrived. *The blast didn't scare away the flies*.

But the strangest aspect of this stark scene was, that concurrent with the gun blast, there in the air, where the horse had just been standing, remained a peculiar looking ghost horse, a hovering phantom image of the beast, which for nearly a full second, lingered in place, then quickly the specter vanished. The three dimensional horse image was in truth simply made from the dust, which had been coating the horse, but for an instant it seemed like it was the soul or spirit of the animal. Perhaps, some of it was hallucinated, since I did see eyes and ears. The oddest thing about the experience was that I thought that I actually felt the horse's soul passing, or maybe I just somehow felt some emotion for the death of the horse, but it was something more of a tactile sensation. It's sort of like when you've accommodated to the sound of a fan, and someone finally cuts it off, then there's the pronounced corresponding silence, making you realize that the fan had been running.

The blast had knocked the horse out of his heavy powdery coating, just as surely as it had knocked him

out of life. The killer boy was smiling, plainly enjoying his kill, and patently pleased with himself. This made me again think of the older La Guardia, who killed the two teens, on the road to Puerto. Scanning the surrounding land, I looked for, but saw no, witnesses. No one had seen the killing of the old stud. If the kid was caught for killing the horse, I'd no doubt be in trouble, with my Dad. Right after killing the stud, the smiling boy turned to me. *I'm glad his gun is now empty.*

"I've always wanted to do something like that! That was so cool! Wasn't it, Joey?" The kid exclaimed.

"Yeah! Way cool, man." I insincerely, but rather strategically, responded. *I sure don't want to piss him off.*

Even though the kid had emptied both barrels, he would no doubt soon reload, ergo the last thing I wanted to be was confrontational. I figured it was best to get along with the young psychopath, then gradually disassociate myself. Unfortunately, we went to the same base school, and I sensed that dealing with a psychopath might be slightly tricky. Had I done or said anything his mind considered hostile, the opportunity for reprisal would be his for

the taking, and considering what he'd just done to the horse, I didn't want him to think that I might fink on him. Besides, I didn't care too much that the horse was dead. So, I decided to speak proactively.

"Hey man, we can't mention this shit to anybody, not even the fact that we've been bird hunting off the base, and we need to get outta here fast." I advised, and with a smile on his face, he nodded his agreement.

Not until ten years had passed, did I mention the shooting of the old horse to anyone, certainly never to my parents. A few months later, the kid was killed, while off the base. Perhaps, the boy succeeded in getting involved in something dangerous, or it was just an accident, but his body was found laying in a narrow alleyway in Cadiz. The right side of the top of his head had been caved-in by a softball-sized chunk of concrete, found on the ground next to his body. Some people felt that maybe some kids up on the rooftop, thirty feet above him, had dropped or thrown it, perchance as a joke, just intended to just scare him, or perhaps, it had been murder. That mystery was never solved. Officially, it was deemed an accident, but I've always figured the kid had done something unkind to someone, who didn't care that

he was a kid. For some reason, I've always felt like the murderer was an offended Spanish child. I liked to imagine that the boy didn't know he'd been struck, but just died instantly. Base security found-out, that the kid's parents didn't know he'd ventured off the base. Dad later told me that no fingerprints could be lifted off the chunk of concrete, and there were no witnesses. Oddly, there was no blood on the piece of concrete, which made me wonder about whether it had actually killed him. The base medical officer had deuced the kid had died during the daily siesta period, and so most folks were inside relaxing or sleeping. Traditionally, siesta time was from two to five pm.

The siesta was born, before air-conditioning, and allowed the people to escape some of the day's heat with a nap. During the siesta, I mainly saw kids on the streets. Some Americans liked to make fun of the Spanish siesta, claiming it was a sign of laziness. However, many Spanish shops stayed open, until seven or seven thirty pm, and the families often ate their dinner around nine pm. When dining out in Jerez, many of the restaurants didn't close till 2 am, and it was always seemed nice to eat late at night, outside on a patio, in the candle-lit cooler air.

After the kid shot the horse and turned around, I could see that a fine blow-back spattering of the horse's blood had spritzed about his face and chest. Worried that mist and tiny red droplets might get us caught for being off the base, I mentioned that if anyone found out about the horse and saw the blood on him, he'd be questioned. I wiped the blood off his face, neck, and chest, using only my hand and some of the dry dirt, then I tied his game stringer to the back of his ammo belt, lengthened it, then looped the stringer over his shoulder, so the bloody dead birds hung on the front of him, thereby explaining any remaining blood spatter, which I might have missed. Still no one confronted us, before we got back to the base. *I hope, for his sake, the horse doesn't have rabies.* And yes, horses can contract that illness. I saw scars on the horse's legs, and assumed that more than once the equine had fought-off the rabid feral dog packs, which notoriously roamed the territory surrounding the navy base. If so, there was a better than even chance the horse was infected with the deadly virus. Maybe the horse was better off being shot, since the alternative was to slowly starve, or to die miserably of rabies.

While animals may suffer miserably, at least, they don't have the burden of a memory, allowing them to repeatedly fear their death.

Why Be Anything? by Miller A. Worey

As mentioned, I realized that if my new acquaintance got caught for killing the horse, I would probably be incriminated. Much as I disliked his killing of the old horse, I was more concerned with Dad's wrath for my having been hunting off the base, on private land, which was definitely a big political no-no.

For a few seconds, before we left, I studied the corpse of the horse. Dead, the animal looked even skinner. The flies wasted no time entering the dead animals mouth, nostrils, eyes, ears, as well as the feasting on the bloody wound made by the shotgun. *What a bad life, alone and with nothing, but dry grass to eat, and all those nagging flies.* At least, the horse had probably felt little pain.

After killing the horse, the kid ejected the two empty solid brass shell casings on to the ground. Clearly, the empty shells could become evidence, perhaps with his fingerprints on them, and so I told

him, and he picked them up and put them back in his ammo belt. I suggested that we use pieces of the ground shrubs to sweep away our footprints, as we back tracked from the area. After a hundred or so yards, we tossed the branches away in with some other bushes of the same type, then walked on the outer edges of our shoes, to confound our footprints. My maternal Grandpa, the lawyer, had repeatedly lectured me about evidence.

The boy reloaded his gun with the red cardboard birdshot cartridges, and we continued hunting birds, as if nothing happened, though I urged him to head back toward a distant pond, over a distant rise. After we'd walked about two miles, we stopped on the edge of the five acre pond. He went swimming and washed his skin and clothes, then used his wet shirt to clean the blood off his ammo belt. Using his bare feet, he buried the two brass shell casings in the muddy bottom of the pond, then we continued on, walking back toward the base. Not wanting evidence that we'd been hunting off the base we disposed of the birds in the bushes around the pond. No doubt the local rodents soon made quick work of the dead fowl, so only in that respect the birds weren't wasted.

Once again, I couldn't let anyone know, for fear

my parents would find out, that I'd been hunting off the base. I never told this story to my folks… never, not even in old age. My Dad was always especially sensitive about anything, which might have had the slightest political ramification, and killing a Spanish farmer's horse definitely qualified as a diplomatic nightmare. Before my dear Dad died, and before he'd lost his ability to speak, due to an apparent stroke, he questioned me about a series of things, which he suspected I'd been involved in my childhood. To spare his feelings, I lied. The lies, I served-up to my father, devastated me, and still haunt me. Why not grant a man, who's about to die, peace of mind? Certainly, no parent enjoys thinking ill of their child. While Dad was a master at reading a bluff in a poker game, he couldn't read my lies.

Ordinarily, a child knows their parent better than the parent knows the child, still the parent generally believes the reverse.

The Family's Lie, by Dr. Omar A. Wiley

None of my friends would venture off the base, not to go hunting, nor to attend the bullfights, and

certainly not to visit a prostitute. Except for shooting at the base range, playing backyard football, and going to the beach, I was something of a loner in Spain. When not asleep or at school, about seventy percent of my time was spent off the base: hunting, watching bullfights, shopping for collectible coins and fireworks, as well as visiting a certain beautiful prostitute, named Anna, who's discussed in the next chapter.

In poverty stricken Spain, the killing of a horse, even an old skinny one, was most likely considered a major financial loss by the owner. And even if it wasn't, you can bet, that the farmer was sure to make a huge deal out of it, looking for some kind of reimbursement from the US government, if he found out it was killed by an American. Poor people are frequently desperate, and quick to sue. As of late, America has become the land of frivolous lawsuits, and most are launched by the poor. Many southern poor people, take pride in managing to finagle a bogus lawsuit, as if they had actually accomplished something good.

Never again, did I go shooting with the trigger-happy psycho-kid. To say the least, he had a devious mind; of course it wasn't long and he was dead,

anyway. The family wanted the *Military Police* and *Naval Intelligence Service* to investigate further, but the kid was a known trouble-maker, and interest in his death just sort of faded, believing that if he was murdered, he'd probably brought it on himself. While I wasn't too terribly different from him, still different I was, and that minor difference, at least in my mind, seemed important. It was true that I definitely liked blood and gore, and I enjoyed killing, but not in the same way that he did. Never did I return to that particular field to hunt, for fear the old farmer might be there, and assume I'd been the one, who'd shot his ancient Rocinante.

Having departed the pond, we were returning to the base, and the two of us had just reached the top of a long rounded ridge, when we heard a pair of high pitched motors coming from the south in the shallow valley in front of us. As if what had happened to the old horse wasn't enough bloody insanity for one day, I was about to witness, yet one more giant piece of carnage, before getting home. We were still a mile from the perimeter fence, when we heard the two engines, headed in our direction. They were coming from our right, about to pass below in a hollow in front of us, where I then noticed an

unexpected sight, a strutting red rooster, down in the shallow valley. It was the same depression, we'd walked though, on the way out to the abandoned house. Although there was no farm or house within a mile or two of the little valley, mysteriously there was this reddish golden rooster strutting around, like a miniature cartoon soldier on patrol, as if the bird owned not only the small valley, but all of Spain, up to the Pyrenees Mountains. Why the bird was there I still have no idea. Even at that distance, I could see his colorful gold and blue wattle and the bright fire-engine red comb atop his head. Half the comb was laid down and the other half stood straight up. Both the wattle and the comb seemed to dance with each theatrical strut. The bird, with the brain the size of a pea, seemed to exist for five reasons: mating, fighting, crowing, strutting, and eating, not too different from some humans. That bird was alone, and far from any farm.

Since we were armed and off the base, not to mention that we were coming from the direction, where the horse had just been killed, hearing the approaching engines, we instinctively ducked down behind some low bushes, along the ridge-line. As the sounds of the engines grew closer, we peered through

the bush into the valley. The two jeeps each contained two Spanish Marines: a driver, and the other manning the machine gun in the back, mounted to the jeep floor. The jeeps were chasing a pack of about twenty wild dogs. I knew those dog packs were extremely dangerous, and so unloaded the birdshot and reloaded my gun with the powerful brass shells, and told my dubious shooting partner to do likewise.

A moment later, the jeeps were right below us, passing on either side of the confused dog pack. At that point, the rooster was completely surrounded by the dogs, but no dog attacked the mechanical colorful flapping and hopping fowl. The dogs were too worried about the jeeps to attack the bird. The mutts were various sizes, and all extremely dirty. As the two jeeps passed on either side of the pack, the dogs bunched-up, looking to each other for protection. A couple dogs snarled at the jeeps. The rooster was repeatedly jumping up in the air, terrified by the sudden appearance of all the dogs. The canines all stared at the military jeeps, yet there was no actual barking, some growling and snarling, but mostly just good ole fashioned wild-eyed fear.

Once the jeeps passed-by the dog pack, both

vehicles stopped only twenty yards from the wary mongrels. The animals looked confused and didn't seem to know what to do; they had stopped running and momentarily stood-still panting hard. At this point, the rooster took the opportunity to run free of the dog pack, only to immediately reassume his comical strutting. It was as if the rooster knew what was coming.

The moment the jeeps fully stopped, the man in the back of each vehicle stood-up, grabbed the mounted machine gun, and suddenly both guns opened-up. These guns fired much more rapidly and louder than those of the Guardia de Civil. Brass shell casings flew upward and out onto the ground. The bullets knocked most of the dogs down hard, hammering them flat into the dirt. It was almost exactly that; as if, the dogs were being beaten into the ground by invisible hammers. There was dirt flying-up into the air, as the bullets tracked back and forth, across the ground. One-second the animals were all standing, snarling, and looking at the jeeps, and the next, they were knocked flat down on the ground, never to again move. A few dogs were pushed and scooted across the surface of the ground and through the sparse grass, by the bullets.

Only one dog had broken from the pack. He sprinted as if he was part greyhound, and had made half way up the opposite rise, then the puffs of dirt caught-up to him, and he was flung a few feet through the air, with his jaw swinging loose, yet still attached by some furry skin. Not one canine had escaped. Fortunately, none of the bullies had been directed toward us. Shooting dogs in the valley was like the proverbial shooting of fish in a barrel, or ducks in a pond, or shooting an old horse with a twelve gauge from less than two feet away. When the guns stopped, the rooster had survived, and the four Spanish Marines were laughing at him.

I thought about the older guard, who had machine gunned the yellow Opel, joking about the teen with the shot-out eye. *What's with the laughing at death?* As with the Opel, I could make no mention of what I'd seen happen with the dogs to my folks, since I wasn't supposed to be off the base. My companion turned to me and whispered.

"That was cool as shit, Joey."

"You know it, man. But, we can't mention any of this. If our parents will find out, we'll never be able to leave the base, and I make money buying coins in Cadiz and fireworks in Rota." I cautioned.

“Mum is the word, Joey. My lips are sealed.” He assured me.

“Loose lips sink ships.” I countered with the old wartime saying.

After the two jeeps had driven back, from where they’d come, the horse-killer and I walked down and looked at the mutilated dogs. *The buzzards will be coming.* The machine gun’s shell casings looked about like thirty caliber shells, similar to what I used in the M-1 Garand. The rooster was still marching up and down on the valley slope, and occasionally he glanced at something on the ground, then pecked. *I don’t see any insects, he must be pecking at tiny seeds.* My new acquaintance was eyeballing the rooster, so I became concerned, and spoke-up.

“Don’t shoot the poor rooster, or the guards might hear your shot and come back. And when that dead horse is found, we don’t want to be connected to being in this area.”

Sometimes, I wondered about what would have happened, if the jeeps hadn’t arrived that day. *Were those dogs tracking our scents?* If the dogs were tracking us, they might have attacked us! Could we have handled all the dogs, armed with only our pair

of double barrel shotguns, which would have to be reloaded quickly? Possibly the pack would have ended us; perhaps, not. Most likely the first four shots, from our double barrels would have killed four of them, but they were a boney hungry-looking lot. On the other hand, the first four shots might have frightened the others away. The trick would have been to shoot early, to give us a chance to reload, and one of us shoot, while the other reloaded.

It was a well known fact, that the Spanish Marines regularly machine-gunned roving dog packs, since the feral canines commonly carried rabies and represented a serious health hazard to the surrounding communities, including the US Navy base. The wild dogs would sometimes sneak under the base perimeter fence and bite the domestic dogs, owned by the American families. That situation had recently killed a Navy lieutenant. He'd been my customer, in two ways. He'd often bought some of the old coins that I'd procured at the Spanish antique shops, and I was also his paperboy. I threw a paper route, delivering the military newspaper called, *The Stars and Stripes*. It was my fourth real job, and I was then eleven. The Navy lieutenant, had been barely nipped by his family pet, a hyperactive moody little

chihuahua. The bite had barely drawn blood, so he remained unconcerned about it. I was lucky the dog had never bitten me.

The chihuahua had been seen running away from a pair feral dogs, just outside the perimeter fence. The little dog had managed to escape by darting through a tiny hole under the perimeter fence and back onto the base. The pet had come home with a bite mark on its side, but no one had paid it much mind, others than to wash the wound. As the rabies progressed, the pet went insane, and so for a day or two the family just avoided the temperamental pet. During that time, the chihuahua had nipped the lieutenant's finger. It wasn't much of a bite so the lieutenant had just simply washed it, and forgot about it. One morning the family got-up and found their pet dead on the tiled kitchen floor, and so the young officer simply buried it in the backyard. The family wrongly assumed the dog had most likely eaten some rat poison. The lieutenant later became ill and just thought he had the flu, but then he became confused and disoriented, and soon died of rabies, before the docs could properly diagnose him. In those days, I don't believe there was any post symptomatic cure for rabies. In other words, for the

treatment to be successful, it had to have been initiated, before the symptoms appeared. As a result, if you were bitten by a dog and you didn't know if it was rabid, you just played it safe and got the treatment, which was about twenty painful injections in the belly. The injections were administered in the belly, because the volume of those early injections was too large for the butt or arm.

While in Spain, I bore witness to death, both of people and animals. The lieutenant was a genuinely good man, and kind of a mixed bag. He'd good-naturedly haggle the price of a coin, but always gave me an overly generous tip, when I collected for the newspaper. The entire neighborhood became depressed, when he died. But for some reason, his death had no effect on me, none. When the lieutenant died, the family shipped back to the states, and a new military family moved into the house. Certainly, I wasn't happy he'd died, nevertheless, I felt nothing. Possibly, about that time, death had become just another thing. The only six deaths which ever moved me would be the death of two girlfriends, three strangers, and of course, my Dad's. On the other hand, the heinous killings and mutilations, inspired by Charles Taylor, got to me.

His despicable deeds are discussed in the last of these ten books. Taylor proved that some things are worse than death.

My throwing the paper route pleased my parents. Still, I made more money selling collector coins to certain naval officers and fireworks to various American kids on the base. My first informal job had been long before going to Spain. At age six, and I had stumbled upon it by accident. One day, I questioned Mom about why she saved the empty coke bottles, on the floor in the corner of the kitchen, and she said that she took them back to the grocery store, and could get two cents for each one, and the larger empties were worth a whole nickel. I wrongly assumed that such refunds only applied to those bottles, which she herself had purchased. But one day, I came home drinking a coke, and Mom told me that when I was finished drinking it, to put the empty bottle with her other bottles in the kitchen, so that she could get the refund; ergo, it dawned on me, that every empty glass soda bottle represented free money, like a tiny gold nugget. Everywhere I went, I looked for those discarded *Coca-Cola* bottles. Frequently, I'd find bottles in the trash receptacles near the soda machines. I lived on a Navy base in

Maryland, and started to look for the soda machines, assuming that the near-by trash receptacles were essentially untapped gold mines. I'd find so many bottles there were too many for me to carry, so I tied the handle of my wagon to the back of my bicycle seat, to tow it behind me. Pedaling around the base, pulling the red *Radio-Flyer*, I'd scout-out and rummage through countless trash receptacles for bottles. When I'd get home, covered in sweat, I put the bottles in brown paper bags, which I'd gotten for free at the navy-exchange, or the grocery store. Back then, the paper bags were made thicker and stronger. I'd then store the bags of glass bottles in our family's old wooden garage. None of the stores used the environmentally hazardous plastic bags, commonly used, now. In fact, now most all of the coke bottles are also plastic.

https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/plastic-shopping-bags-environmental-impact/

When I'd gotten a dozen or so bags filled, I'd load them into the station wagon, and Mom would take me to the grocery store or the bottling company to turn them in for cash, but she demanded that I

give her gas money, and so initially, I didn't make much. Gas was 29 cents per gallon and Mom demanded I buy her two gallons, even though it was only a ten minute drive to the store or the bottling plant. Mom claimed that by charging me, she was teaching me business practices, and she was but that wasn't her primary motive. Collecting coke bottles became something of an obsession, and I greatly enjoyed working and making money. One day, my head was down inside a smelly galvanized trashcan, looking for, and fishing-out, coke bottles, when I heard a man's voice speaking to me.

"What ya doin fish'n around down in that trashcan kid… look'n for them coke bottles?"

Pulling my head out of the trashcan, I turned and faced my inquisitor, a tall lanky, grayed haired salt, dressed in sailor blues, topped-off with the round white cap. Back then, people referred to the sailor cap as, 'the dixie-cup.' Dixie cups were small white paper cups, people often used at picnics, and I suppose the hat somewhat resembled it. The man had numerous stripes, which were then called 'breaks,' running up both forearm sleeves, indicating he was an old Navy chief. The man looked so old, he probably should have been retired, so I surmised he'd

been busted more than once. In those days, if an enlisted man stayed in the Navy long enough, he was almost guaranteed to get busted down in rate, at least once, since there was always some sadistic officer, who enjoyed busting enlisted folks, similar to how Donald Trump appeared to enjoy firing people on his TV show. There's nothing quite like having an inferior arrogant boss. Too many of the noncombatant officers were ego-centered administrators, your standard pain in the ass. On the other hand, the acceptance standards for enlisted personnel were less rigorous, back then. Nevertheless, sometimes those lacking in disciple, may display surprising amounts of courage.

"Yes, sir! I'm just trying to make a little money, collecting coke bottles." I politely replied.

"I bet you make some pretty good money. I see ya all over the base, with ya bike and ya wagon, collect'n all them bottles." He said, pointing to the few bottles already in my wagon.

"Yes, sir! My Mom and I turn them in, at the *Coca-Cola* bottling plant, and I get two cents for each one… five cents for the big bottles." I responded.

"Well, I can tell ya where there's a whole lot

more of them soda bottles. Just go look in the big gray metal dumpsters, right behind each of the barracks, and there's rows of barracks on this base, and lots of dumpsters. You know where the barracks are? Right on down that way, heading toward the pier, where the aircraft carrier is docked… on the left about a quarter mile, before you get to the carrier, just before the short docks for all them landing-craft." He smilingly said this, pointing.

I caught a slight whiff of alcohol, and figured that might have had something to do with his being busted. About a month later, a landing crafted driver pointed out the same old salt to me, and said that the aged sailor had been one of the survivors of the USS Indianapolis. The ship had delivered the critical parts of an atomic bomb, to the island of Tinian. Said parts were used to assemble 'Little Boy' dropped on Hiroshima. After the USS Indianapolis left Tinian, it was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. There were 1,195 men onboard. There were 890 men, who made it alive into the water after the ship sank. The ship sank quickly, so there was no time for lifeboats, no fresh water, nor food. It wasn't long and the sharks came, and those shark attacks were legendary. Out of those 890 men, only 316 men survived. Help didn't

arrive for four days! The ship had radioed for help, and the call was actually heard but ignored. The asshole who ignored the SOS, claimed that he figured that the mayday call was actually the Japanese trying to bait the Americans.

Realizing that the historical old salt's suggestion about the dumpsters made great sense, I thanked the tall seaman, climbed on my bike and hurriedly pedaled toward the barracks. Thousands of sailors lived on that base, each barracks was a large three-story brick building. There were about fifty such buildings, each with a giant-sized dumpster right behind it. *Why hadn't I thought of this, before?* There were five rows with ten buildings in each row, and so fifty dumpsters, loaded with all the coke bottles that a six year-old could possibly handle. For a young kid, it was like discovering the mother-load on January 24th at Sutter's Mill, circa 1848. *I'm gonna be rich!*

There were so many bottles in those smelly old rusty dumpsters, that I had to fasten a tall voluminous cardboard box inside the shallow walls of my wagon, and then rope and tape the box onto the wagon body. And still, I couldn't carry all the bottles. With the old salt's suggestion, the need to search for bottles had finally ended; it had been

transformed into a matter of hot sweaty labor. In a way, the discovery of that huge stash of bottles, lessened the pleasure of the job, but the idea of making lots of money definitely had its own appeal. Dad said that my love of money was from the Jewish ancestors on my mother's side. While my father may have made that cultural joke, he had a deep respect for the Jewish people, partly owing to his having been an attendee at the Nuremberg Trials. Those trials were managed by the US Army, and so how my Dad, a Navy man, who'd fought in the Pacific theater, ended-up in the Nuremberg Trials, remains a slight mystery.

The cardboard sides of the box, which I'd taped and tied into my wagon, were about four feet high, and I'd reinforced it, with lots of duct tape, so the weight of the bottles didn't burst its' seams. In addition, I purchased and installed three large wire baskets, on my bike, mounting one to the front handle bars, and the other two on either side of the rear wheel, like saddlebags. With the big cardboard box and the three wire baskets, I could carry significantly more bottles per trip. The weight of the bike, the wagon, and all the bottles, took all my six-year-old strength to get rolling. Running four to six

trips a day, five days a week, I was making about $500 per month. Not bad money for a six year-old kid, back in 1954. Especially when the average working wage for an adult was less than that, only $3,300 annually, and I was making around $6000. I collected so many bottles that Mom had to make several trips per week in our big blue *Ford* station-wagon, to the local *Coca-Cola* plant to turn them in, since the grocery stores refused to accept that many bottles. In turn, the city's *Coca-Cola* plant loaned me large wooden racks to put the bottles in, for easier storage and conveyance; still, I used some heavy waxed cardboard boxes and bags, along with those wooden racks. Our family's old detached wooden garage was a great place to store all the bottles. To give me more storage space for the bottles, Dad had taken to parking outside in the driveway. The family garage became my bottle storage warehouse. When Mom and I went to the bottling plant, the station wagon was completely filled, with the rear seat folded down for more room. In addition, the roof luggage rack, was packed full with crates and boxes of bottles. I had to load the car, but the men at the *Coca-Cola* plant unloaded and counted them. The *Coca-Cola* plant paid in cash, and of course I had to straight-away pay Mom her gas money. Paying Mom,

and buying the three wire carry-baskets for my bike, made me better realize the actual nature of business, for every business has its operating expenses. The bottle collecting business, also caused me to wear-out two sets of bicycle tires. Collecting coke bottles was my first experience with the world of business. Mom made me pay for new clothes and tennis shoes, since some of my clothes had been severely stained and torn from climbing in and out of the metal dumpsters, but clothes were cheap then.

There was a glorious side benefit to collecting coke bottles from those smelly dumpsters. Since most of the residents of those barracks were adolescent males, each and every dumpster contained a massive number and variety of discarded porno magazines. Sailors and pornography go together like butter and grits, and so the dumpsters were like the Library of Congress of porn. Up until that time, I'd never heard of porn, much less seen any, yet I instantly realized the purpose of such magazines. Needless to say, I was pleasantly pleased. My six and later seven year-old brain spent many hours, hungrily gazing upon the beauty of countless nude female forms, and so burned into my brain is a virtual treasure-trove of thousands of images of gloriously naked women,

covering the gambit, from gently beautiful soft porn, to extremely brutal hard-core porn. The latter was puzzling to my six and seven year old mind. What really surprised me was that the sailors could throw-away such valuable magazines. It also saddened me, that I couldn't take it home, but I inherently knew I couldn't.

Those magazines contained women of every size, shape, age, race, etc., exposing each and every piece of their gorgeous exogenous anatomy, and then some, and so I remain forever grateful to that old USS Indianapolis sailor, who clued me into those fruitful dumpsters. Perhaps, he knew what he was doing, aside from the bottles. While I made a lot of money from collecting the bottles, I also put away a lot of erotic memories. In money and erotica, the dumpsters satisfied me. When I wasn't drooling over the porno, I was focused on making money, both quests had their own rewards. Mom was so proud of me for the latter, while I so enjoyed the former.

Some of those sunny summer afternoons, those steel dumpsters would be 160 degrees inside, and even after I'd gotten the coke bottles out, I'd still be inside those steel boxes, flipping pages, while euphorically sweating, etc. Thank God for

Kodachrome.

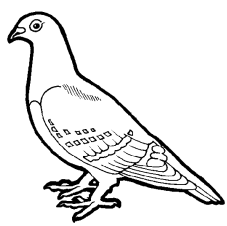
Kodachrome

When I think back
On all the crap I learned in high school
It's a wonder
I can think at all
And though my lack of education
Hasn’t hurt me none
I can read the writing on the wall
Kodachrome
They give us those nice bright colors
They give us the greens of summers
Makes you think all the world's a sunny day, oh yeah
I got a Nikon camera
I love to take a photograph
So mama, don’t take my Kodachrome away
If you took all the girls I knew
When I was single
And brought ‘em all together for one night
I know they'd never match
My sweet imagination
Everything looks worse in black and white
Kodachrome

They give us those nice bright colors
They give us the greens of summers
Makes you think all the world's a sunny day, oh yeah
I got a Nikon camera
I love to take a photograph

written by Paul Simon

OBJ



THE RACING PIGEON AND THE PROSTITUTE

One evening the base administrative officer, Commander White, dropped by our house, and over drinks suggested to my parents, that the following morning, I should accompany him to a live pigeon shoot, at a gun club in southern Spain. Dad instantly

agreed, seeming to delight in the idea that I was becoming more adept with firearms. Mom just frowned. By then, I'd been shooting clay pigeons for six months. It was Mr. White's idea that I be moved-up to shooting live birds. In secret, and as mentioned, I'd already been bird hunting off the base for about two months. Plus as a young child, I'd shot a lot of stationery birds at my Grandpa's beach house, using his ever dependable tube-fed .22 semiautomatic rifle.

The live pigeon shoots were held in the countryside of Andalusia, about an hour's drive from the base. The Andalusian community is officially recognized as a distinct, if not separate, 'nationality,' within Spain. As I recall, the Andalusians were viewed as a separate race, much as African Americans are now in the United States, though in general, not as dark, and without the curly hair. One day, if the world last long enough, there wouldn't be any distinct races. Still, the bigots will still find people to hate.

The Andalusians are the darkest pigmented of the native Spanish, and are generally those with some amount of Moorish ancestry. Our aforementioned gentle and loving maid, Carmen was such a person, even though, unlike the rest of her

family, Carmen possessed sad light blue eyes. Many of the lighter skinned Spanish of northern Spain, the Castilians, would discriminate against the Andalusians of southern Spain; much as redneck Americans discriminate against blacks, Jews, and northerners, which they generally refer to as, Yankees (Some say that the word is derived from the word, 'eankle,' a Cherokee word, meaning, 'coward,' and therefore I'm all for discrimination, but only against evil, not against skin color, religion, intelligence, age, wealth, geographical location, or sexual preference. Twain often had things to say about bigotry. The below quote may imply that bigots have a way of holding back certain races, while claiming that they're inferior.

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

Mark Twain

The quaint rustic shooting club was a spacious one story building, whose walls were constructed of large roundish light tan and gray stones, haphazardly

held together by copious amounts of mortar and concrete. Sticking-out through the walls, just below the roofline, were thick dark brown support timbers for the roof. Supposedly, the heavily stained timbers were from the dragon trees, found in Spain's beautiful Canary Islands. I recall how I thought it strange to name a tree after a mythical beast. The tree was named because of one of Hercules. adventures. The one were Hercules was supposed to bring back three gold apples, from a garden guarded by a dragon with 100 heads.

The club's medium pitched roof was covered with large wooden shake shingles. On the back exterior wall was a giant milk bottle-shaped stone chimney. In the cold of winter, bluish gray smoke could be seen at a distance, pouring-out of that large chimney, and threading its way into the low iron gray overcast sky, as if the chimney's smoke had created the entire thick cloud layer from horizon to horizon. On days like that, the threat of rain was greater, and the pigeon shoot would be canceled, if it did rain. Nevertheless, many people still came for the drinks and camaraderie.

The shooting clubhouse was basically a ten thousand square foot restaurant-bar, with attached

patio, and an expansive shooting-field. The giant elevated outdoor stone patio was adjacent to the green grass shooting arena, which somewhat resembled a well manicured baseball-field. The attendees, mostly wealthy Spaniards, were by and large friendly to me, though they were aloof to people, they deemed to be of a lesser financial class. Some of the shooters were also affluent French, German, and English retirees, since many Europeans had pensioned in southern Spain, due to its lower cost of living, and good weather. In Andalusia, it was easier to stretch the dollar, the franc, the mark, or the pound. There were also two Moroccans, who periodically attended the shoots. The Moroccans were serious and behaved in something of an overly formal fashion, taking great pains not to speak with the prostitutes, who often accompanied men to the shoots. Nevertheless, it wasn't hard to tell the Muslim Moroccans were very much interested in the young women, but just didn't want the other men at the shoot to realize it. Religion seems to pour the coals to the fires of sexual desire.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, live pigeon shoots which had begun in England around 1750, were still going-on, for just over two hundred

years, when I was a child in Spain. These events were regularly held at the aforementioned private club, northeast of Jerez de La Frontera, on Saturdays or Sundays; it sometimes varied. The clubhouse had a phone, so people would phone before they came. In those days, phone was considered a real luxury in Spain.

Rumor has it that such pigeon shoots still take place in Spain, but I can't seem to confirm that, on the internet. One old fellow told me that they may still go on in Madrid, at the *Club de Tiro Somontes.* If they do, the shoots are probably held in secret, for there's little doubt that the animal rights folks might do their best to shut them down. In my old age, I agree that the animals need a break from all those pieces of human gray matter which feel the need to kill or injure them; even if they evolved from the need to feed oneself and family. The problem is that those pieces of gray matter are often hooked-up to other, more sophisticated pieces of brain tissue, which invariably give the human an extremely unfair advantage over the animals. There are a few exceptions, where hunting might be admired, like those Masai warriors, who hunt lions, while on foot, armed only with a spear. Still, I might call that

foolish.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FX4Bw5RVDTU

Unlike those lions, the birds at the pigeon shoots weren't too dangerous. The little feathered fowl were sort of like those Iraqis, who got their asses blown apart by our huge numbers of high tech cruise missiles, and countless tons of smart bombs, as delivered by the American military. My point is that it's probably the same piece of overly aggressive brain tissue, which likes to kill animals, that also enjoys starting wars. In many cases, it's fairly undeniable.

https://m.facebook.com/notes/aloof-inc/a-brief-history-of-live-pigeon-shooting/146738582043721/

Neither Mom nor Dad ever came to the pigeon shoots, not even once. Mom went to church on Sundays, and on Saturdays, she went to one of her Navy Wives meetings. Dad was either doing paper work, or repairing things in his shop, or sometimes,

he'd go back to his office; unforeseen military and political things were always cropping-up. His job consumed nearly all of his available time. In Spain, Dad and I did very little father-son stuff. He was often overly serious, and ill tempered, because he was so terribly overworked. It was as if the US Navy owned my Dad, lock-stock-and-barrel. I'd lost almost all contact with him. Still, I'd briefly see him for about half of our family dinners. And then, during the meal, he'd just uttered a couple of sentences, cram his food down, and then go back to doing paper work, either in his study, or back to his office.

When Dad got older, he sweetened-up a tad. But then in a strange way, I missed his anger. The anger made him seem more vibrant, more dynamic, more important and passionate. The sweetness of old age, though peaceful, was lacking in a certain vitality, and was accompanied by an uncomfortable frailty. Once in my teenage years, Dad took me to a professional football game, in Washington DC, and throughout all the years that I knew him, it was the only big event we'd attend together. He never really enjoyed that game; it was easy to tell, his mind was still on his intelligence work. Our going to that game was more awkward, than it was fun. While I loved

football, Dad didn't know anything about the game, and I could tell he wasn't remotely interested. Mom had probably goaded him into taking me. The job-related variables in Dad's life were far too ponderous, to allow him to be engrossed in a mere football game. While I wish we could have done things together, I honestly don't regret the fact that we didn't. Contrary to what your average psychologist might advise, and what Hollywood puts forth on the big silver screen, there are some things which are more important than raising a son, i.e., the survival of the free world. When you balance the two, the significance of one child compared to the survival of free world, it's pretty much a no brainer. Since Dad was continually busy, I always rode to the pigeon shoots with Mr. White in the front seat of his luxurious black Mercedes with expensive tan leather seats. Mom, as well as the Jewish Commander, always preached that such leather seats were a huge waste of good money. Our car had clear plastic covers, over cheap cloth seats. Those plastics seat covers were certainly useful, when I was going through withdrawals on that road trip through Europe. Sometimes, Dad couldn't pull the car over quick enough, and Mom and I had to clean-up my vomit. There's nothing quite like going through

alcohol withdrawals, while on an extended road trip.

Indulging in luxuries is a tricky thing. Spend too freely and you risk poverty. Moreover, if you buy those leather seats, you're somewhat overlooking the poor. *Should I spend more for leather seats, or give some poor kids food and clothes?* As mentioned, Mr. White was the administrative officer of the base, and a crack shot with a shotgun. He was the individual, who taught me the most about shooting. After finding the appropriate weapon and ammunition, as well as a certain amount of practice, competitive shooting is mostly psychological; at least, it was for me.

One night, Mr. White and I were returning to the navy base, after a long afternoon of pigeon shooting. The Mercedes was weaving along a dark narrow stretch of well-worn pot-marked asphalt, through the suburbs just to the east of Jerez de La Frontera. The car was traveling down-hill at about 50 mph, closely following another car. To make matters worse, there were countless hand-pulled carts, along the edges of the street. Mr. White was a bit of a tail-gaiter. Tail-gaiters were one of Mom's pet peeves. Moreover, Mom loved to criticize anything, relating to Mr. White, since she blamed him, as well my Dad, for my

having excommunicated the church. Mom threw a fit about my not attending. The real problem was not my eternal soul, but my bailing on the base church made Mom look bad to the minister, and her friends in the congregation. Mr. White had once made a comment in Mom's presence, to the effect that church was for people, who had time to waste. Mom had demanded that Mr. White be excluded from our parties. Never-the-less, I was still allowed to go to the pigeon shoots with him.

As the Mercedes smoothly rounded a slight curve to the right, fifty yards up ahead in the dark, I saw a man staggering along the right side of the ancient road. Just as the car in front of us reached the point that it was about to pass the wobbly inebriated Spaniard, the poor drunk stumbled, probably having stepped in a slight depression in the uneven ground. Whatever the cause, the unfortunate man lunched head-first out into the road, directly in front of the car, which Mr. White was following.

The event happened so quickly, that the driver ahead of us didn't have time to apply his brakes; still, his brake lights did light-up, but it was only after his car that struck the hapless drunk. At first, the driver's headlights brightly illuminated the poor falling man.

In a flash, I saw his white shirt and his shiny black hair, right before he disappeared into the car's right headlight. His head impacted just below the right headlight, on the car's unforgiving chrome bumper. That fatal thump could be heard, inside Mr. White's Mercedes, even with the windows rolled up. It was a very hard hit. To this day, I can recall that deathly thud; a sound to signify the end of life. The most surreal aspect of the accident occurred right after the impact.

The man's skull had burst open like a water balloon, with brains and blood flying-out through the dark night air. The soft pieces of brain tissue were lit-up by the headlights of our car and the car in front of us. Oddly, the pieces of bright white and red reminded me of little colorful moths fluttering, spinning, gyrating away into the warm night air, and my eleven year-old mind wondered if those pieces of brain were in fact the man's actual thoughts, being scattered out into the darkness of eternity; each twinkling piece of tissue a notion.

Now as an old man, I better understand that those flying pieces of gray matter represented his consciousness and more. Flying out through the night air… his: thoughts, emotions, memories, sights,

sounds, feelings, fears, ideas, dreams and schemes. But then, at age twelve, it was just the thought of the man being set free, the white and red pieces, being disseminated out into the darkness. Pulling off the road, Mr. White ordered me to stay put in the car, but I got out anyway, and Mr. White didn't try to stop me. His order for me to stay in the car purposely lacked conviction, perhaps because he was distracted by what had just happened.

When the man was hit by the car, his body had spun in the air, end-to-end, parallel to the ground, like a helicopter blade. His body came to rest on the side of the road, with most of it laying in the sparse grass, face down, with his feet pointing down the road, and what was left of his head oriented in my direction, illuminated by Mr. White's right headlight. Approaching the body, I could see that the top half of his head was completely missing. His skull had been opened, as if by a can opener. The top of the skull was off to the side, laying over onto the dead man's shoulder, but still attached by a ragged piece of the hairy scalp. The sight was not so shocking, as it was interesting… a look inside the head! Stepping-in closer, I could smell the mixture of sweat and alcohol. I didn't feel any depression, just a creeping

curiosity, about the open head. That lack of feeling was probably augmented by my being fairly inebriated. The reader may find the account of the accident depressing; nevertheless, the tragedy of the man's brains fluttering away through the headlights, may have significantly figured into the direction my life would later take.

How well I recall thinking that the inside of the skull vaguely resembled a simple red and ivory china bowl, though part of the inside floor of the skull wasn't smooth, as I'd imagined it being. Some of what was left of the brain, which apparently hadn't gone flying through air, laid strung-out on the grass, and some minor amount was still inside the china bowl. *It looks like pudding.* It was at that exact moment, I realized that we were all made of parts, much like a machine: a car, a washing machine, a submarine, an airplane, etc. *People are a bunch of parts, and when the parts break, we die!* I hadn't the slightest clue about how the parts worked; nonetheless, I suddenly knew we were only parts. After the parts stopped working, and unlike what many brainwashed people might have you believe, there's probably just nothing, nothing good nor bad, no heaven, nor hell, just glorious nothing, something

like sleep, but without any dreams, and without waking-up. There was no rebirth, or heaven, or hell. Looking at the broken skull, that simple conclusion materialized, and it's stuck with me, since.

There's nothing to fear but nothing, no burning forever, like the minister preaches. It was a strange, yet obvious, little insightful moment, which still holds appreciable weight. That revelation seemed so right. I felt no sorrow for the man. The drunk simply had been transformed into nothing, as if he'd just disappeared. It's hard to get more simple than nothing. Although for most folks, their ego might struggle against the idea of nothingness, in a way, it's the same as the brain's struggle with infinity. Three pounds of gray mush can only do so much, no matter how impressive its circuits might be. It's like asking a termite to read, and although it may indeed devour the pages, it comprehends little.

Mr. White finally said, "Don't just keep staring at him, Joey. You should go get back in my car." *What difference does my staring make?*

"I'm okay Mr. White…really." I answered, staring at the body.

"Come-on Joey, please get back in the car. This is

going to take a while, and your mom and dad would want me to make you get back in the car, and stop looking at what's left of his head!"

At his repeated insistence, I returned to the comfy front leather seat, got Mr. White's whiskey flask from out of the glovebox, and chugged down a shot. Mr. White stayed outside the car to handle logistics, and to calm the upset driver. Someone in the other car had run off to find a phone to call the Spanish police, who took forever to get there. Then the police took hours longer to process things. After answering their repeated questions, the driver of the other car, just sat on the ground, moaning, and holding his head in his hands. *Time for the confessional.* No large hearse came to collect the body, but the dead man was loaded onto a three-wheeled makeshift flatbed truck, right next to some cardboard boxes filled, freshly pulled sugar beets, which still had some dark soil stuck to their purple skins. *The beets have just been pulled out of the ground, and that body is going into the ground.* After the corpse was laid on the wooden flatbed, the old man, who drove the little truck, picked up a couple of the golfball sized pieces of brain and put them in the body's open skull, then wiped his hands on pants of

the corpse. After that, he covered the dead man's body, with what looked like a piece of old green curtain material with gold tassels. Finally, he affixed the curtain material around the body with some twine. All the while, he talked about needing to get home to his wife. Later, Mr. White told me that the old truck driver was the dead man's uncle, and a former veteran of the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps, that was why scooping-up his nephew's brains didn't seem to bother him.

It was nearly sunrise, when Mr. White and I finally got back to the base. After leaving the scene, Mr. White had found a phone and called my Dad to let him know why we'd be late getting back. Even so, Mom was like a raving lunatic. She was all about drama, trying to use the death of the drunk Spaniard, as an argument for me to return to church. Regardless of any particular situation, Mom would often use it to further her agenda, to get her way, whatever it was. She was the consummate rebuttal artist, a master debater. Her insistence was relentless, and she brought-up the drunk dead Spaniard, for weeks thereafter. Still, I never went back to church. There just might be a part of each believer that's a disbeliever. There's a lot of

disbeliever in many believers down here in the South, and that may have something to do with why they can be so insistent and pushy when it comes to their religion, many Muslims are like that, as well. The drunk Spaniard being hit by the car was the first and only big thing, which had happened to me, off the base, which my parents actually found out about.

Quickly, I had learned that with two bourbons, coursing through my young veins, I could shoot better. Three drinks, and I was too slow. No drinks or one drink, and I was too fast. In addition to selling liquor, the bar at the shooting club also peddled fine cigars and cigarettes from all over the world. Many children in Spain smoked in those days. It was at that club, that I smoked my first cigar at age eleven, a thick *Partagas*. They were made in pre-Castro Cuba, but highly popular in southern Spain. After Castro took over, the US banned the Cuban cigars. The cigar buzz was appreciable, but I was only good for about three or four puffs, because I got too lightheaded, and I hate nausea. Up to age twenty-four, I occasionally smoked cigars and pipes, and enjoyed the relaxing feeling, but never felt the addiction for smoking. What made me quit was that I'd gotten a sore throat, and I realized that the nicotine seriously

cut into my motivation, so I quit smoking, and I never really missed it.

The shooting club was not a place where the men ever brought their wives. The reason being, that many of the men were escorted by high-end prostitutes, and/or young mistresses. The rustic club had a relaxed happy ambience. People dressed well, but casually, and openly spoke their minds. Everyone, except for perhaps the two cautious Moroccans, appeared to enjoy each other's company. The Moroccans never joked, and were also too careful about what they said. Such stilted behavior didn't sit well with the club's relaxed ambiance… lots of drinking, talking, and laughter.

Several of the prostitutes seemed to receive greater deference than was generally accorded to wives. Spanish wives were supposed to be reserved and demure, especially around their husbands. Wives were selected for their familial qualities: honesty, being a good mother, integrity, compliance, etc. The husbands generally lorded over their wives, but prostitutes were given more latitude. In some ways, prostitutes were accorded a higher standing. They were often far more interesting than the wives, being better at open or less restricted conversation, playing

card games, and of course, they were more adept at being alluring and provocative. In social interaction, the hookers were treated a bit like men, in that they were allowed to speak-up, curse, argue, and even occasionally boost, at least they were there at the shooting club. It was considered acceptable for prostitutes to make sexual jokes. All in all, prostitutes exuded an artfulness, and seemed to better understand the male of the species. The they generally smoked, drank, gambled, and overtly touched and brushed-up against men.

No one, except the wives, the nuns, and the priests, looked down on the prostitutes. Unlike the present-day American police, except for a few, the Spanish police afforded the prostitutes respect. At the shooting club, there was no baccarat, although that game was hugely popular in the Spanish card clubs of Jerez, Cadiz, and Puerto. The card clubs of southern Spain, also had their share of prostitutes. At the shooting club, they played poker and Chinchon, a game similar to gin rummy. I'd occasionally visit card clubs in town, since some of the antique dealers, from whom I purchased coins, played there. I'd frequently meet them at their card club of choice, and they'd already have a few select coins in their

pockets, for me to consider. I'd simply stand next to the card table and examine the coins, and of course, I'd have my handy-dandy world coin book.

Many years later, while living in Mobile, Alabama, I would help to solve a few murders. One was the murder of a young prostitute. I was shocked at how police were indifferent to her untimely death, simply because she was a hooker. After I figured-out who did it, the crime was swept under the rug by an attorney, who was well connected with the police, or maybe it was the police, who swept the murder under the rug, to appease the attorney. The cops were clearly in his service, and a certain detective threatened my life, to force me to back-off the case. The attorney's son was likely the killer. Most people in Mobile didn't care about the dead young prostitute, not the local politicians, not the cops, not the State, and certainly not the killer. Only her schizophrenic mother, and a few of the other prostitutes seemed to care about her death. Not even her drug-dealing boyfriend cared. Her murder wasn't a quick thing, but a slow grisly torturous death, which she'd been forced to endure, for the killer's enjoyment.

So many folks love to indulge in their favorite

biases and prejudices. But make no mistake, it can sometimes be a foolish endeavor to attempt to judge the worth of another human being, since all you've got is your three pounds of gray mush and often the thinnest slice of their history. You may feel that another person is too indifferent or uncaring, when what they display is actually all they're capable of giving. You may feel that a person is too emotional, but that is simply how their brain is wired, and they literally can't be otherwise. You may feel someone needs to try harder, but trying or motivation is not some etherial spiritual thing, not something that exists apart from a person's mind, but rather it is merely the product of brain cells firing; clearly limited by those neurons' and their requisite neurochemicals, ergo the person may be trying their hardest, yet you may still feel they're lazy. Frankly, if you strongly feel the need to judge, or especially if you enjoy judging, you may be someone, who's actually least equipped to do so.

> Judge not, that ye be not judged.
>
> Matthew 7:1 King James Bible

Perhaps if a person stops judging, they may become free of those insecurities, which motivated them to judge. The presence of prostitutes at the shooting club, are probably why my parents never attended. There's a better than even chance that Mr. White had said something to Dad, about them being there. But if that's true, my Dad still approved of my participating in the shoots. Most likely, having been a combat vet, my Dad knew the importance of being able to shoot. For Dad, and many combat vets, killing was a skill every man should possess. Of course, I never mentioned the prostitutes to Mom or Dad, nor did I discuss them with Mr. White, but it was rather obvious that we both had seen them, and most likely Mr. White had seen me leering a few times, especially at one particular beauty, Anna. Anna also caught me looking at her.

During WWII and the Korean conflict, Dad traveled to many countries, and most likely was fairly worldly wise. No doubt, he kept military secrets, but quite possibly, he also had some of his own, though I honestly have no valid reason for saying that. Likewise, my life was fast becoming a collection of secrets. I used to think that I had compartmentalized my many secrets and lies, setting

aside a restricted region of my brain, like a collector might hide his valuables in a secret compartment. Through the years, I've found out that when you keep a secret, you find out something about yourself. Carefully guarded secrets impart a satisfying aspect to one's identity. Throughout my life, I've gotten so good at keeping secrets, that I love to give people the allusion that I can't keep a secret, by telling them things which are supposedly secret, so the person may wrongly assume that I've concealed nothing of any genuine significance.

No doubt, I've more secrets than padlocks on that famous little Roman bridge, *ponte molvio,* and that's no exaggeration! And that's just another reason why this scribble is a fictional autobiography; and yes, that's got to be an oxymoron. Throughout my life, I have treated my money much as I have my secrets, giving people the impression I have none, which is close to accurate. Most times, I do the same thing with my education, giving the impression that I'm relatively uneducated, and the older and slower I get, the easier it is to pull-off that trick. It's always best to know more than you let on. I'd learned these techniques from my Dad, and the aforementioned Jewish commander, the one who bought some of my

coins. Money and secrets can be an addiction of sorts, and both can own you, each in its own fashion.

As mentioned, often, Anna, a particularly intriguing prostitute, would show-up at the shooting club. The young woman possessed devastating beauty, complimented by an outgoing charming personality. She was definitely a high energy and extremely sexual being. Anna was taller than half the men. For me, it was literally impossible not to stare at her. I found myself wondering why such a beauty had become a prostitute. *She could have any man she wants.* She was a highly intelligent dark Moreno, but with Castilian facial features, elevated cheekbones helped to frame her huge soulful dark liquid eyes, which flashed and burned. Her sculptured umber lips, contrasted nicely with her brilliant white smile, which always included her eyes. Her upper lip was slightly oversized, with a provocatively wide philtrum, and she had the unusual humorous habit of magically pushing-out those magnificent lips at socially inappropriate times. For example, when men argued about almost anything they deemed important, which was often politics, she'd push out those lips, make a theatrical sigh, indicating she was bored, and those small gestures would generally end

the conflict. Then, she'd smile, arch her back, and considering her anatomy, social homeostasis would be restored. She loved playing cards and was often the winner, and typically, the men didn't seem to mind losing to her.

Her provocative smile would often cause the arguments to subside and men's concentration, when playing cards. The men would inadvertently redirect their focus onto her. All her facial attributes seemed to come alive when she smiled, which would automatically make me smile. Fifteen years later, I would run into a woman, while I was living in Mexico, who looked almost identical to Anna, although the personality was notably different. Nevertheless, when I meant the woman in Mexico, it was like I was stepping back in time, as if Anna had once again showed-up.

One unseasonably cold cloudy afternoon, the pigeon shoot had been delayed, due to a light drizzle, and no one wanted to get their expensive shotgun to get wet, so everyone had been forced indoors. We were all eating, drinking, talking, playing cards, as well as keeping warm by the huge stone fireplace, while waiting for the light shower to clear. Whenever, Mr. White went to use the bathroom, I

was allowed to takeover his chair and play his hand. After all, I'd been playing cards, since I was three. The bar made more money, when the shooting got delayed by rain, so the bartender plainly enjoyed bad weather, selling more booze and receiving the corresponding tips.

Later that day, when I came out of the men's room, there in the club's back hallway stood Anna, the aforementioned beautiful prostitute, looking directly at me, and smiling her dazzling suggestive smile. *Has she been waiting for me?* Her irresistibility paralyzed me, so I just stood there gazing at her, the two of us barely three feet apart in the little dimly lit narrow hallway. Her gorgeous unwavering stare literally staggered me. Anna's ivory linen wrap-around skirt was loose and largely open, so the vast majority of her long shapely right thigh was plainly visible. Her well-fitted light lime green silk blouse was partially unbuttoned, far into her pronounced gently swaying warm cleavage. Desperately, I was rightly a losing battle to only look at her face.

Her sex rendered me powerless and dumbfounded, and so no words came to mind. I was just completely riveted to her hypnotic sex appeal, and the fact that she had apparently been waiting in

the narrow hallway to speak with me! Seconds passed, and still words failed me. Then my eyes inappropriately scanned downward to the rest of her, and she realized that I was fully stymied, and so her smile grew wide, and knowing. She gently grabbed my hand, then lightly touched my fingers, which sent a lightning bolt directly up to my brain and straight down to my groin. My underwear instantly tighten. Anna turned my hand over and pressed a folded paper into my palm. Later, I'd see that she'd written her address in a clear long flowing highly slanted script. Then, her smile vanished and she spoke in a serious manner, as if I were an adult. Her English was pretty good, and better than my Spanish.

"I'm Anna. But, you know that. Don't you, Joey? It easy to see you want me, so you come see me, my love. *Holy shit, she just called me 'love!'* My address is on that paper. I show you what a women likes and what you like, too. I can tell you've never been with a woman, so don't worry. I take good care of you. You come to me, and I teach you many things… things I like. I get drunk Saturday night, so I get up late Sunday mornings. Come see me, but not before nine. Okay? I know you drink, that's good. We can share some whiskey together. I see you drinking,

here. And, you bring me nice present. Yes? Don't come before nine. Okay? Don't you tell any men here, that I let you come to my house to sex with you. *She said sex!* It doesn't matter if you don't know what to do, I show you everything. This be our secret! I know you can keep secret. Can't you? You see, I know you sneak-off the base, because I've seen you many times at bullfights and the card clubs, and I see you in Cadiz, too. You go many places. You very sneaky boy. You keep me your secret. Sunday, don't you forget to bring Anna nice present, but if you can't get me a present come anyway, but try to get me good present."

Still speechless, I just stood staring and stunned in the dim narrow hallway, and so Anna chuckled. A few days shy of my twelfth birthday, and slightly in the bag from the booze, I had absolutely no savoir-faire, and hadn't uttered a single word, throughout the entire encounter. She clearly liked the effect she had produced in me. Nevertheless, I knew exactly what she meant about secrets, and I knew I desperately wanted her. Before leaving, she smiled again, looked down the hallway to make sure no one was watching, then she leaned down to kiss me gently on the corner of my mouth, while I gazed into

the glorious abyss of her semi-exposed breasts, and inhaled her heady perfume. During the kiss, the tip of her tongue had touched the edge of my mouth, and I could taste the whiskey, and feel the warmth coming-up from of her breasts, as her hair lightly touched my face and neck. I was overwhelmed. All I could do was stare and nod, as she departed into the Lady's room. I'd never had a girlfriend, and yet I'd just received an offer for sex from a highly alluring fully grown beautiful woman! *This is my day of days! Thank you, Lord!* Looking back, I'm sure I appeared like a halfwit.

My young mind was obsessed with the promise of the Sunday soon to come. They don't call them 'hookers' for nothing. The fact that she had referred to me as 'her love,' kept repeating in my child's mind, for days… for years. Her voice, her words, her perfume, her touch on my hand, the light brush of her soft dark hair, her devastating looks, all these things, but especially the kiss on the corner of my mouth, devastated me. And then, there was the handwritten note, and I later noticed that it smelled like her perfume. For two years, I kept Anna's note, but when she moved, effectively abandoning me, I grew angry and threw it away. Nothing lasts forever,

except for forever; whatever that is. All through that week, I constantly thought about Anna; each time with the same pleasurable determined vascular response. Before returning to the club's dining room, I made a quick return to the Men's room, to keep from appearing inappropriate. At age eleven, it only took a second.

Anna's home was on the edge of the nearby town of Puerto de Santa Maria, which bordered some woods, and was only a twenty walk from the base. For the rest of the week, Anna was all I could think about, though I hadn't a clue as to how things would proceed once I got there. The next day, after the pigeon shoot, I climbed the perimeter fence to the base, walked through the woods, and located her house. Honoring her request, I didn't go up to the door and knock, though I did hang-around it for a good hour, hoping to get a glimpse of her, but she didn't appear to be home. Nothing short of the threat of death has the intensity of an eleven year old male's interest in sex; ergo, I could barely manage any sleep, till that glorious morning, which at long last, finally arrived. There was no problem getting out of the house, since Mom had gone to church, and my ever busy Dad didn't care where I went. Just a

few hours after the blessed sunrise, in the summer of 1960, I would lose my virginity. For my first visit, I wanted to bring her a magnificent gift, but didn't know what she liked. Besides, I didn't have much more than my paper route earnings, and the money I'd made buying and selling coins, and buying the expensive shotgun had used-up most of that. Then I remembered that Anna drank scotch, when playing cards at the shooting club, and Dad had countless cases of scotch in the house. Once when I'd asked him how many cases he had, he'd replied uncertainly.

"I'm not too sure Joey, maybe sixty or seventy cases. In fact, there'll be a planeload coming in tonight, from *Littlemill* (distillery in Scotland). Ten percent of that load is mine."

So, what's one less bottle? Yes, and so I admit that I stole from my own Dad, and took Anna a fifth of expensive scotch. The first-time being with her was far too important, not to bring a good gift. Also, I bought a large bouquet of flowers, which I'd paid ten cents for, cutting through the Puerto market, on the way to her house. Before leaving home I grabbed a brown paper bag to carry the scotch in. Knocking on her back door, I wasn't sure how things would go.

She opened the door, smiled, then she noticed my two gifts. Anna was absolutely thrilled with the liquor, but couldn't have cared less about the flowers. Where most women love flowers, she barely noticed the delicate pink roses. She just opened her hand and let the bouquet fall to the kitchen table, and immediately rinsed-out two water glasses under the tap in the kitchen sink, then poured us each two fingers. We customarily clicked glasses together, gulped half, then sipped. She kissed me long, slow, and deep, while she firmly held both sides of my head, and I was solidly overwhelmed. The kiss lasted more than five minutes. She was in full control, and I was in heaven. When she drew her face back from mine, she smiled, laughed, grabbed my hand, then happily pulled me into her bedroom. Anna wasn't one for wasting time.

In those days, scotch and bourbon tasted sweet to me, much like coke or sweet tea, but richer and more heady, and with a much more pleasant after effect. Setting the drink on her wobbly bedside table, she began to slowly disrobe, carefully watching my face as she stole my breath away. Without taking my eyes off her body and face, I quickly swallowed what was left of my scotch. Watching her strip, my heart

was pounding so hard, I could feel it thudding hard on the underside of my sternum, as blood rushed to a medial location. *It's really going to happen! Holy shit!*

Once nude, Anna sat down on the side of her bed smiling, that same lovely smile I'd seen her make so many times at the club, but now the smile was a little more relaxed, yet also more serious. *Her nipples are so think and large!* She was all mine, at least for a while, and when you think about it, a while is all we have. In terms of eternity, a second and a century are practically the same. At that moment, I had no clue how to proceed. I was simply stuck-on staring, but staring at her was oh so wonderful. Anna gave me the clear impression she was inviting me to look.

Life isn't a matter of milestones, but of moments.
Rose Kennedy

As her eyelids slightly lowered and the corners of her mouth lifted, it was clear that she enjoyed my gazing at her; I certainly did. In spite of that, my eyes kept going out of control examining the magnificent feminine parts of her anatomy; yet, to be polite, I'd momentarily gaze back into her gorgeous eyes. Her gaze remained seriously playful, with her knowing

smile and a brief little nod she let me know she wanted me. While she sat on the side of the bed, she playfully placed the sole of her right foot up onto the edge of the bed, thereby giving me a paralyzing visual advantage. I yet can see every detail… every curve, line, and fold, and even now, I can recall her mesmerizing scent. She also smelled of olive oil, and Castile soap. Quite literally, I inhaled the scent of her wetness, and felt her radiating heat. Her elevated thigh, and exposed sex, caused me to slight lean forward. The brown pubic hair, the soft hazel-colored labia, with the light pink interior were different, than I'd expected, more complex than I'd imagined, not just a simple hole, located a few inches below the bellybutton. *I could look at this forever.* Her vagina was far more arousing than what I'd seen in the two dimensional porno magazine photos, as a six year-old in the dumpsters, when collecting coke bottles on the military base. As the months passed, Anna acquainted me with the more sensual aspects of her mind and body. She was definitely a pedophile, and enjoyed mesmerizing me, and teaching me things.

As a result of Anna's persistent sexual gaze, I've always been attracted to women with large dark soulful eyes. For some reason, the contrast between

her black irises and the whites of her eyes, reminded me of black and white piano keys, and the music they played was a melody, written when the first living cell split in the earth's primordial seas. There was a weird coppery taste in my mouth, mingling with the residual scotch. Minus the scotch, it was the same taste, I'd experienced the night I watched the young white woman and black man in the train station.

With Anna that first morning, I clearly knew what I wanted, but I was completely uncertain about how to proceed, so I just took off my clothes and stood next to the bed, hard enough to punch a hole through a cinderblock, like a one eyed starving marooned sailor, glazing upon a bountiful buffet table. Naked Anna just sat there, encouraging me to look. Her form was pure erotic energy, the magnitude of which, I'd never experienced; and yet, it was deeply familiar!

Anna's long thick jet black hair spilled down, over her thick upturned dark auburn nipples, continuing-on down, to mingle with the soft dark curls of her sweet sex. I reached-out and touched her left nipple, and gently massaged it, between my thumb and forefinger, and I felt it instantly harden

and thicken. *God, that's great!* Anna arched her long lean back, pushing the nipple further into my hand, and so I continued, but more aggressively. She then told me to pinch it, to suck on it, and then to slightly bite it, ergo the beautiful young woman repeatedly groaned, a sound that startled and further aroused me.

Feeling her nipples hardening in my mouth transfixed me. She continued to moan and her eyes closed slightly in response. Her moans empowered me. *She enjoys what I'm doing, and her joy makes me feel so good!* Her lips and mouth were wet with the warm brown scotch, and her light pink tongue played over the edges of her snow white teeth and lips. She leaned forward and lightly bit my ear lobe. The sound of her breathing so close to my ear, and the warmth of her breath, made me want her more than life itself, yet still, I wasn't sure how to proceed, but Anna knew.

She gently but firmly grabbed my face between her palms, pulling my mouth to hers. Her tongue was strong and invasive, then it retreated, demanding I reciprocate. At first, I'd gently sucked and pulled lightly on her thick full lips, then after a few seconds, my tongue entered her warm mouth. As I pulled my

mouth from hers, again I slowly sucked and gently chewed on one nipple, while using my thumb and other fingers to pull-on the other. As I did this, I marveled at how it caused her breathing to pick-up. She moaned again, but much louder, then she spoke the words, in her so-so English, I've never forgotten.

"I know this is your first time, Joey. You will probably be very fast, but you be enjoy me, and always remember me. I am going to be your teacher, and I am going to give you something wonderful; something you never forget, even when you are old man… you remember me. Everyone remembers the first time, so you never never never forget me, Joey! I be in your heart, forever. I be with you, till you die!"

And all of Anna's words rang true! She had taught me, that up until being with her, sex had been criminally underrated. To this day, I recall the wondrous details of that Sunday morning in July. Filled with anticipation, I joyfully continued kissing her mouth, and nipples, waiting for her to make the next move. I reached down between her legs and was shocked at the wetness and the amount of heat. Whether it was God's doing or the nature of evolution, the communication in those moments has

been something, which has occurred over and over, through-out my life. My touching her, caused her to quickly react. Since I was a rather skinny twelve year-old, Anna merely looped one of her long smooth arms around my lower back, then using her feet against my shins and knees, she simply leaned back onto the soft, over-stuffed, and creaky old bed, lifting me up and on top of herself. In one smooth motion, Anna reached down and positioned me between her long silky thighs, and with her hand she guided me into paradise, as she concurrently raised and spread her knees. As I gradually sank into her, I was amazed at the feeling. Although, that was my first time, it seemed familiar. *Thank God for Anna!*

You may choose to think that Anna was abusing a child, but for me it was ecstasy, and I sustained no real psychological or physical damage; at least, none I'm aware of. Though I must admit, that in the two years, that I saw Anna once a week, my interest in shooting and schoolwork diminished. By many people's standards, Anna was a pervert and a bit crazed, but she was also loving and erotically pleasing, and there was no lie in the heat of her sex. She was magnificent molten magic. In my opinion, it's not abuse, for an adult female to have sex with a

young male, yet the opposite (adult male with female child) is much more apt to be abuse, since generally the sexual parts of the female brain are wired considerably different than those of the male. Thank God for that undeniable difference. Some of the neuroendocrinology of that statement will later be addressed, in a chapter entitled, *La Juartas* (Book VII).

Since I only knew Anna when I was eleven and twelve, and was only able to see her once a week, she constantly occupied my thoughts, still I never have dreamed of her. During the week, waiting to be with her seemed unbearable. The other six days of the week were occupied by paying customers, all rich older men. Many nights, thinking of her made it extremely difficult to get to sleep, and caused me to drink a little extra bourbon. The only times I could actually sleep with Anna, were after a few orgasms and a few shots of bourbon, and only for a couple of hours in the early evenings, before I had to go home. Since she spoke and understood english, after sex in the evening, I'd occasionally read to her, from my library books. Often, she'd stop my reading and I'd have to translate, or try to translate, a word. Anna seemed to enjoy being read to; after all, back then in

Spain there was only the radio to listen to, no television, and the radio was solid propaganda in favor of the dictator, Franco. Often, I'd listen to the *Radio Nacional de Seville*. The were a couple of Arab stations emanating from Morocco. For some odd reason, I liked to memorize the Spanish advertisements. Spanish seems to be more conducive to music, advertising, and poetry, since the words sound less harsh, and it rhymes more easily, probably because so many nouns end in 'a' or 'o,' and verbs ended in 'r' or one of the conjunctives.

Anna loved the flamenco music on the radio, and she hated the news or anything political. She especially hated anything to do with war, and that was just about all her older Spanish clients, talked about. Sometimes, she'd sing along with songs on the radio. Anna had a rich silver voice, but with an intriguing tight little edge to it, ergo I more than sincerely enjoyed listening.

As mentioned, while she occupied most of my waking thoughts, Anna was never in my dreams, which remained the play ground of strangers, aside from the occasional visit from Dad at the old abandoned runway, with a shiny aluminum DC-3. After that first time being with Anna, my

hallucinations switched from random things like: animals, cartoons, clowns, geometrical patterns, etc., to being mostly beautiful women. Still, none of the women were her. At night, staring at almost any dimly lit distant object, my mind would transform it into a provocative sexy woman. Had I really wanted, I could have seen it for what it was: a bush, someone's mailbox, a fence post, a bent tree, a pile of bricks, etc. These phantasmic women were much prettier than any real woman. Though it may sound foolish to say, they seemed utterly perfect, much like the Vargas nudes, except the apparitions moved, while remaining in place.

Years later in graduate school, I would learn of a cluster of cells in the brain, called the *Septal Nucleus*. Notice that I capitalized the name of that group of neurons. If any words ever deserved to be capitalized, those two certainly do, for that is where much of one's sexual arousal and orgasm take place, ergo without that cluster of nerve cells, the human race would have ceased to exist, or never would have come to existence, in the first place. That same nucleus exists in most mammals, as well as in certain reptiles. Simply put, sexual desire (*Septal* activity) is what allows humans to continue on earth, to

continue to destroy the planet, regardless of all the moral, and religious pronouncements. During a neuroanatomy lab, I was told about an early experiment, where a certain number of poor homeless schizophrenics in Louisiana were surgically implanted with stimulating electrodes in their *Septal Nucleus.* Subsequently, the schizophrenics stimulated themselves to exhaustion, usually foregoing food and sleep, hence the electrodes had to be removed. No foreplay, just instant orgasm at the push of a button… Read about it for yourself. Man's inhumanity to man…

http://www.lsu.edu/psychology/documents/baumeister/Tulane%20Electrical%20Brain%20Stimulation%20Program.pdf

While the electrodes did nothing to effectively treat their schizophrenia, needless to say, it must have been quite a unique experience for them, to have arousal and orgasm at the press of a button. Nevertheless, one has to wonder how that ability to self stimulate interfaced with their schizophrenia, especially if they stimulated, during a hallucination. Although, a few schizophrenics do experience sexual

hallucinations, sexual hallucinations are probably the most neglected, in psychiatric study. In fact, even their prevalence rate seems to be unknown. Perhaps, one day people will pay big bucks for such electrode implants. Possibly in the future, the electrode will interface with a computer program, and DNA mediated sex will fall prey to electrical impulses. Of course the brains which created that surgery, the electrodes, and the programs are designed by DNA. But, as things are going, DNA will probably first fall prey to the greed of the collective corporate brain. Power plants, cars, deforestation, various other forms of pollution, etc. = increased atmospheric carbon = increased planet heat = increased water temperature = plankton blooms = more dead plankton sinking to the ocean floor = more food for anaerobic bacteria living on the ocean floor = increased numbers of anaerobic bacteria = greater bacterial secretions of hydrogen sulfide bubbling-up into the atmosphere = dead humans and animals = humans finally stop ruining the planet.

Years later, I was a scientist, working in a primate lab. An older lady, a *Girl Scout* leader, came into the lab to get permission for some of her *Girl Scout* troop to visit the animals. The following week,

fifteen girls entered the main primate room, along with their leader, where there were about twenty-five male stump-tailed macaques housed in their individual stainless steel cages. At least one of the young girl scouts, or perhaps the scout leader herself, was ovulating and releasing sexual pheromones, for suddenly every one of the twenty-five male monkeys immediately sustained a serious erection and began engaging in high speed masturbation, while screaming, and hooting. The shocked scout leader blinked several times, as if she couldn't believe what she was witnessing, then hurriedly she marshaled the surprised and confused girls out of the room. The odorless pheromones stimulated the factory lobes of the primates' brains, which intern stimulated their *Septal Nuclei*. Monkeys especially enjoy their *Septal Nucleus*, both males and females. The *Septal Nucleus* transcends the rational, and thank goodness it does. Otherwise, sex would be rather boring. What if sex were strictly a logical endeavor, no inexplicable powerful attraction, and no carefree hard-driving passion?

That glorious *Septal Nucleus* receives much of its stimulation from other central neurons, like those in the sensory cortex, which have been stimulated by

neurons in the spinal cord. Said spinal cord cells receive stimulation from nerve cells in the genitals, and from other well known sexually-arousing regions (erogenous zones). The *Septal Nucleus,* as mentioned, also receives stimulation from olfactory regions of the brain, hence certain smells or pheromones (generally odorless molecules, which can stimulate nerve endings in the lining of the nasal cavity, to ultimately produce sexual arousal), which in turn activate regions of the *Septal Nucleus*. In addition, the *Septal Nucleus* in humans, receives stimulation from cells located within the two hippocampi, large lobular-like structures, buried deep inside the temporal lobes of the brain. Each hippocampus is where people store many of their long-term memories, in essence, those two regions (the two hippocampi) are a large portion of the person's life's history. They are sort of like the libraries of the brain; hence, certain sexual remembrances, also referred to as, 'sexual fantasies,' can stimulate the *Septal Nucleus*. Sometimes, these arousing memories are complex, involving millions of cells, yet other times, those stimulating memories are brief, like snapshots of sounds, tactical sensations, visual scenes, etc. Obviously, these sexual memories vary greatly from person to person, running-the-gambit,

from being charmingly innocence to violently criminal, from the sexual mind of an innocent sixteen year old female virgin, to the macabre circuitry of a sexual psychopath, such as Theodore Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer. People born with minimal interest in sex perchance may have a greatly attenuated *Septal Nucleus*, whereas those, whose sexual interests seem to be the driving purpose in their life, may likely possess an unusually large *Septal Nucleus*. No doubt, humans have the most memories capable of causing sexual arousal. It's all a matter of the neurophysiology, and which memories (neural circuits), and which ones stimulate the *Septal Nucleus*. Strange as it may seem to many of us, sometimes it's merely an emotion, or an emotionally laden memory, which stimulates the *Septal Nucleus,* hence the amygdala may indirectly stimulate the *Septal Nucleus.* For some people, even a deep sadness may connect-up with their *Septal Nucleus*, and so perhaps the person wants someone, who can understand the depth of their sadness, or their humiliation, or hate, etc., to generate activity in their *Septal Nucleus*. Maybe, that's why some folks use sex to 'off-set' the sadness of a death in the family. As stated, when it comes to sex, everyone is unique and there's a lot of variability as far as what groups of

nerve cells stimulate the *Septal Nucleus.* Massive numbers of neurons travel from the two hippocampi and the amygdala, to connect directly and indirectly to the *Septal Nucleus*. But again, the types of memories and how many memories vary tremendously from person to person, and many of those circuits are hardwired from before birth. This before-birth-sexual-wiring is especially prevalent in mammals. It's obvious that the circuitry generated before birth is genuine, since animals, which haven't been in the presence of their own specie, still know how to mate, having never witnessed the act. This instinctual phenomena will later be discussed in more detail, when the neurophysiology of dreaming is described, in book eight of this series.

Whenever I think about the fact that memories in the hippocampus can drive sexual activity in the *Septal Nucleus*, I can't help but bring-up my memories of Anna, the lovely Spanish prostitute. There are far too many memories to ever forget her. Anna's precious memories are buried deep in both my hippocampi, and permanently wired-up into my *Septal Nucleus.* The earlier a memory is laid down, the more time one has to make associations/ connections, and the more the memory is apt to be

linked with many other memories. For example, my early memories of Anna are now linked with the writing of these books. This memory-linking phenomenon may be why unpleasant combat memories, as well as certain traumatic non-military memories, are better not being revisited, since revisiting such memories means that more and more connections are made; hence, stronger the memory becomes and the more apt it is to come to mind. By reliving such unpleasant memories various damaging stress-related hormones are released, which can produce unpleasant things, such as: immune-suppression (various opportune pathogen-based diseases, cancer, etc.), premature senile psychosis, mental health issues (depression, mania, and schizophrenia), premature aging, as well as drug and alcohol abuse, as attempts to self-medicate.

The brain dearly loves to collect memories, which elicit activity in the *Septal Nucleus.* (It can also love the unpleasant memories, since they can elicit the release of addictive endogenous hormones.) A person strikes a sexy pose, or delivers a seductive look, or utters a provocative phrase, and if it stimulates a memory in the perceiver, which intern connects-up with and stimulates the *Septal Nucleus*,

then the perceiver may be sexually aroused. That's just one of the reasons that human sex can be so multifaceted, with all its related memories of sights, sounds, smells, emotions, and feelings, creating a myriad of 'turn-ons' and erotic fantasies. Of course, certain memories can also elicit less than desirable feelings. With other non-human mammals, sex is comparatively simple, largely initiated by pheromones, odorless air-born molecules; as well as by certain behaviorisms (rituals, dances, sounds, etc.), but no restaurant dates, dances, movies, meaning friends, facebook, etc. Whatever memory or series of memories connect-up with the *Septal Nucleus* is likely to produce some amount of sexual feeling/ arousal, perhaps culminating in orgasms. Some folks can achieve orgasm, even without tactile stimulation, provided enough other factors (non-tactile neurons) stimulate their *Septal Nucleus*. Some folks never have an orgasm. Indirectly, Anna also introduced me to some of the more unusual psychological aspects of sex. She talked at great length about sex with her clients, and what she enjoyed, and provided extensive instruction.

"Too many men just pay attention to my pussy. They think all I am is my pussy. The whole time they

just push their penis in and out, in and out, in and out, making animal noises. Those boring men never understand that I am more than my pussy. Words are important, too… happy words, loving words, sexy words. Men need to say nice and funny things. I love a funny man, who is also sexy. Too many of my money men, just do what they want. A funny man is a smart man. And, I like a man, who wants to touch and kiss all parts of my body. *I love doing that for her!* For a woman, sex is like love, not so much for the man, but I am the one who spends their money, and I love money. You need to teach me about how to buy gold, like you do with the jew man, for when I get old."

Anna made me eminently aware that women loved, sex, money, and funny men. Sex with Anna was like a river of ever shifting currents and flows; one position flowing into the next, sometimes fast sometimes slow, but never stopping, until the crashing force of her orgasm. After sex my young mind would turn to logical thoughts: making money, sports, designing mechanical devices, etc. This flip-flop was probably owing to the fact that the sexual parts of the brain turn-off the more logical areas, hence with the orgasm, there is a rebound. Then

again, perhaps in some fashion, such sex was love, since I did undergo some depression, when Anna had to leave. But, I was also dealing with post alcohol withdrawals, then, so I don't know how much of my melancholy was owing to Anna.

In both sexes, regardless the person's sexual proclivities, many of those sex-involved neurons are equipped, with varying numbers of estrogen, testosterone, and oxytocin receptors. {Certainly, there are many other types of receptors, as well.} A certain number of those sex hormone (on a nerve cell) receptors must bind their respective sex hormones, for the neuron to go active. Some neurons are also inhibited by binding said sex hormones. Correspondingly, the amounts of these circulating hormones may vary, and so may the number of their brain receptors. Still, many of these hormone receptors are established before birth, but the numbers can vary throughout life.

The more testosterone receptors on those neurons, which connect-up with the *Septal Nucleus,* and the more circulating testosterone available to those receptors, most likely, the more aggressive the person is apt to be about sex, routinely considered to be masculine, and generally, such individuals have

one X and one Y chromosome. Nevertheless, there are also heterosexual females with testosterone receptors and higher levels of circulating testosterone (often with significant facial hair), who also tend to be sexually driven. A lot of a person's sexual preference has to do with the placement (brain locations) of said receptors. The more estrogen receptors on such sex-related neurons, and the more circulating estrogen hormones, generally the more passive or submissive the sexual activity, and such folks are considered to be feminine, such individuals generally have two X chromosomes. Nevertheless, there are heterosexual and homosexual males with increased (above the mean) estrogen receptors and elevated levels of circulating estrogen.

Perhaps, if the male infant first felt sexual arousal, while crawling around a room looking at women's feet; then perchance, the subsequent adult male is aroused by such memories, and he develops the classic 'foot fetish.' Moreover, the hardwired tactile neurons, coming from the sensitive skin of the infant's feet, may connect up with neurons in its sensory cortex, which in turn projects to the infant's *Septal Nucleus* to indirectly augment the subsequent foot fetish in the adult. Coincidentally, the portion of

the sensory cortex, which corresponds to feelings of the feet, is right up against, and partly integrated with, those of the genitals, which of course project to the *Septal Nucleus*; hence, tactile stimulation of the feet may cause sexual arousal in some folks.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cortical_homunculus#/media/File:1421_Sensory_Homunculus.jpg

https://www.google.com/search?q=free+public+domain+drawing+of+sensory+cortex+homunculus&client=safari&channel=iphone_bm&sxsrf=T97ETEscoM%253A%252C4fqYMzBUZx8vgM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kRjRHF0EIKcajMCnds7Z5yeHQpWLQ&sa=X&ved=2ahUK

The above overly simplistic hypothesis asserts that to a large degree, sexual fantasy is both the sensory nerve cells, as well as memories (in the brain's two hippocampi), as well as the emotions of the amygdala, which directly and indirectly connect-up with cells in the *Septal Nucleus,* as well as the corresponding levels of neurotransmitters, hormones, and hormone receptors, regardless of whether the

person is born with them, or experiences them. Sexual imagination is largely a matter of cellular wiring (interconnected neurons). By-in-large, sexual circuitry thankfully has limited conscience control, for if people had unabridged control over their sexual desires, said desires would not be nearly as desirable; in effect, the magical mystery tour of sex would be forever lost. Is a life without some measure inscrutableness worth the breath? After all, I've never heard of a male or female, who became aroused by working on math equations, though for all I know, such stimulation may actually be possible. Indeed, some people may be sexually attracted to intelligence, since the related genes may enhance the fitness of the offspring. One thing for sure is that the theory of evolution is not a theory. If ever something has been solidly proven, it's evolution. Likely, the only reason it is still called a theory is to continue to allow certain religious people to question it, and to continue to make fools of themselves.

Much of the arousal, be it from tactile stimulation, perceived beauty, sexual fantasy, etc., is beyond the grasp of conscious control. Throughout the history of humankind, sexual memories/fantasies have created tremendous amounts of pleasure, but

have also destroyed countless marriages, wrecked many careers, put various people in jail, and others in the grave. Perhaps, such things are why most of the earth's religions are configured, so as to help people to better control people's sexual desire. On the other hand, perhaps religion is just some people, who enjoy controlling other people, in general. As a rule, such folks have more ego than actual kindness.

Sexual enjoyment/neurology has certainly kept the porn industry rolling in the big bucks. But, when it's all said and done, sex is only wiring… circuits composed of nerve cells. Some of those sexual circuits are established before birth, hence there exists an 'instinctual' part to a person's sex, which may not begin to fully function, until father-time brings on appreciable amounts of the appropriate sex hormones. Consequently, almost all people, are born with a predilection toward certain sexual behaviors, and then life's experiences build on that and adds various decorations, ergo each person's preferences become uniquely their's… whatever, spins your beanie.

Most likely, sexual serial killers, and various other sexually driven psychopaths, have a proportionately greater number of connections (more

neurons) between their brain's extra large aggression centers, their memories of gore and violence, and their *Septal Nucleus.* Quite possibly, those involved areas, and others, literally have more neurons, and with fewer neurons capable of inhibiting them.

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=neurophysiology+of+aggression&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart

Consequently, those folks are more prone to seek-out and employee violence as a form of sexual stimulation and expression; from the all too common guy, who gets horny by slapping around his girlfriend, to that famous African dictator, who watched and participated in porno films, where the females were slaughtered, during the sexual act (to later be discussed). Conceivably, the *ventrolateral nucleus* of the brain's *hypothalamus,* as well as discrete parts of the amygdala elicit much of what is considered aggression/cruelty, violence/sadism, and the number of testosterone receptors on those particular neurons, and of course, the actual number of neurons, may have a lot to do with the nature of sexual aggression, as well as rape and sex related murder. Aggression and violence, especially when

combined with sex, while not ubiquitous, are becoming more common, with considerable costs to both the perpetrator and the victim, as well as to those who may love them.

The number of such anger-generating neurons, which stimulate (directly and indirectly) the *Septal Nucleus,* probably determine how much aggression is involved in the person's sexual arousal/activity, with the extremely submissive indecisive shy folks at the lower end of the spectrum, and the violent self-centered murderer/rapists at the other end. Sadly, such people admit to loving their violent dreams, and are often sexually aroused, while (or especially while) committing a battery, or even a murder. If you ever read something written by a sociopath, it's most likely so self-centered, that it's terribly boring. Since there's a smidgen of that pathology in me, I've fought hard to reduce its influence, herein, but no doubt I've failed miserably.

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=hypothalamus+and+aggression&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart&sa

Infants spend a fair amount of time in the womb, just comfortably soaking in the warm amnionic fluid, kicking mom's insides, while periodically dreaming. The contents of those dreams allow the baby to know certain things, before emerging into the cold cruel world. For example, they're born knowing what a nipple looks and feels like, as well as what to do with it. They suckle on their toes, and press they face into the placenta, as if it's mom's breast. Maybe, because of those dreams in the uterus, they can also recognize that a snake is more dangerous that a bunny, a spider is more menacing than a butterfly, a rat more treacherous than a lamb. Many animals are born with dream-based knowledge… genetically created dreams, which are played over and over, before the animal is born. Perhaps, the fetus also has sexual dreams, which once born, don't become functionally active, until he or she begins to produce appreciable levels of their sex hormones. During those in utero dreams, the receptors for those sex hormones are first created, being attached to the nerve cells, which comprise their sexual circuitry, but the fetus is dependent on mom for the sex hormones to create those receptors, since its gonads (testicles or ovaries) don't function by producing appreciable amounts of sex hormones. Consequently, in a very real way,

much of one's sexual nature begins in the womb.

https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0109346

The point in one's life, where sexual interest begins, is no doubt different from person to person. For me, it was a sexual attraction for my kindergarten teacher, but not for actual intercourse, but only because I didn't yet understand that concept. Anna was my first. That first day, when I was standing next her bed, and she was allowing me to touch and kiss her, she just tightly embraced me and pulled me in close, enfolded me with her long lovely arms and legs, and gently kissed me about the head, neck, and face with those stunning full dark Andalusian lips. As nearly every young guy knows, the rapidly ensuing pleasure was nothing short of overwhelming. I came like Krakatoa, while inhaling her whiskey laden breath, and she whispered in my ear.

"Now you will always be my man. I love you, Joey. You come here to fuck me once a week. Okay? Try to bring me nice gift." As silly as it may be, to

this day, those highly manipulative erotic words seemed sincere, to my eleven year old brain..

"I love you too, Anna." I reflexively answered, realizing that before that moment, I had only told my mother I loved her.

Anna's sexual desirability was so powerful, that my spectacular 'first time sexual performance' lasted all of two wondrous strokes, but the pleasurable feelings and sublime visual images of that first encounter are still burned into my two aging hippocampi. May they always remain there, until my last heartbeat! If I die with Alzheimers, next to my recollection of my child, I hope those are the last memories to be lost. Sometimes, there comes a time to die, and hopefully it's not before one gets too stupid to respectfully end it. A few years after Anna left, marijuana would grant me the gift of sexual control. For me, sex was the best thing about ganja. Running a distant second was music, and number three was food. Marijuana only gave me the allusion of intellectual competence. If you decide to look-up great discoveries made while high there are a few, but none were made on weed. Carl Sagan said some of his ideas came from weed, but Sagan mainly just wrote about other people's ideas and research;

nevertheless, he knew how to inspire.

Coincidentally, after that first time with Anna, later that same week, my Dad mysteriously gave me an overly serious, and fairly awkward, one minute lecture. It touched on the dangers of venereal disease, and stressed the importance of condoms. There was no way he'd found out about Anna from me, and I seriously doubted that he'd spoken with her. Mr. White never spoke with any of the prostitutes at the shooting club, and Anna had overly emphasized the fact that she didn't want any of the men at the club to know that I was seeing her. In fact, she was terrified about anyone finding-out that we were having sex.

As mentioned, Mr. White worked directly under my Dad. Their offices were across the hall from each other, at the base headquarters. Most days, they went to lunch together. Later, I asked Anna if she had said anything to Mr. White, about our having been together, and she emphatically denied it, and of course, we all know that beautiful prostitutes never lie. In spite of my hugely pleasurable experience with Anna, it didn't bother me, when I'd see her at the pigeon shoots, with her customers; after all, they were her livelihood. Anna never taught me jealousy,

and was always kind to me. At the club, every now and then, she'd flash me a furtive smile, or I'd give her a covert wink, yet we'd say nothing, per our agreement. She used to tease me about wearing the condoms. She'd place the condom in her mouth, then use her tongue and lips to skillfully unroll it, forcing it down the length of my shaft, as it went into her throat. The condom enabled me to delay my childhood orgasm. After, putting the condom on, she'd always say something extremely provocative.

"Don't you want to give me a baby, Joey? Don't you want to be a daddy? You know we'd have to get married by the priest; maybe, in the cathedral in Seville. We could stroll the streets, arm-and-arm, husband and wife, pushing a baby stroller."

In those days, finding an abortion doctor in Catholic Spain would have been as likely as finding an honest politician in Washington. Sometimes, I'd lay in bed at night and wonder what would it be like to be a father at age twelve. Oddly enough, I actually liked the idea. In history, there are actually a number of recorded twelve year old dads, and some even younger. My rational was, who better to raise and understand a kid, than another kid?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_youngest_birth_fathers

I imagined spending my life living with a prostitute; her with her paying customers, and me with my collector coin, and fireworks, businesses. However, through most of my early adult life, I didn't want a kid, even though as a twelve-year-old, it seemed appealing; aside for the minor glitch of my Mom and Dad flipping-out, over Anna being a prostitute. By the time the baby would have been born, I would have almost reached the ripe old age of thirteen. Now I realize that having a child is life's greatest blessing. How I love my daughter! What a horrible dad I'd have made if Anna had actually gotten pregnant.

If Dad had somehow found out about Anna, he didn't seem to be upset; although, he did look seriously strained, during the condom lecture. I know I was. He never asked me about what went on at the shooting club. The only indication of his knowing about Anna was the out-of-the-blue condom lecture, accompanied by a new pack of condoms, and instructions on where to buy more, off of the navy base in Puerto. Dad even went so far as to drive me

off the base and point-out the small store, which sold them. This was odd, since I was not allowed off the base, except with Mom and Dad. Dad constantly worried about politics and social appearances. While I was a keen observer of my impressive Dad, he didn't really have much to say to me. For all I know, my being with Anna may have seemed completely natural to Dad; after all, for a time, he'd been raised in a house of ill repute, owned by his dad, my Grandpa.

After the condoms in the pack, Dad had given me, were used-up, I went to the store in Puerto to buy more, and that proved to be a fairly dramatic experience; especially, that first time. Entering the grungy little drugstore, if you could call it a drugstore, I smelled various strong chemical smells. The interior of the store was roughly the size and shape of a railroad shipping container. The register was in the back of the store. It all looked so dingy, the shelves were unfinished wooden planks, and the floor was made from the same planks. I'd selected the time to be right before the siesta, hoping there'd be no one else inside. Unfortunately, there was still one very old woman back by the register, arguing with the proprietor over the cost of a box of laxatives,

insisting that at her age the laxatives should be for free. *She's probably right.* The heated argument involved one peseta, the basic monetary unit of Spain, about the value of a penny. The proprietor wore a black arm band, indicating that someone had recently died in his family, but in Spain, recent could have been years ago. Some Spanish kids breast fed for five years, and some people wore their black arm band even longer. I suspicioned that the black armband wearers fell into two categories: those who truly mourned over the death, and those who enjoyed the sympathy. The older female laxative buyer finally left, and then I approached the proprietor. Earlier, I had covertly spotted the packages of condones on one unpainted wooden shelf, behind the register, so I didn't speak, just pointed. My heart was pounding, and I had a great deal of difficulty maintaining my air of casualness, neither could I make extended eye contact with the old proprietor, who only smiled, and shook his head. His droopy eyelids said it was nearly time for his siesta, and so he wasted no time completing the transaction… thank God. Small brown bag in hand, I headed for the exit, like I was escaping a torture chamber. The old storekeeper followed, closing and locking the door. As the door closed, I realized that

my armpits were soaking wet. For many years, I was ashamed and embarrassed about my relationship with Anna, but the shame also worked in my favor, to drive my libido, and so I suppose it wasn't genuine shame, but some weird type of shame-driven sex. To this day, I've wondered about whether my having an extended sexual relationship with a prostitute, so young in life, didn't do something to twist my persona. But perhaps, in the big scheme of things, such stuff really doesn't matter much. Too many people like to blame their problems on one thing or some person, they encountered when they were growing-up, when generally their problems are owing to a complex matrix of variables, and the fault is more their's than they'll admit. Only once in my life have I desperately wanted a longterm relationship, but she died young. It was as if God, or the cosmos, had planned a barbaric stratagem. It was only a few years, past my four years of post-alcohol suicidal depression, and her death created a second bout of depression; although, it seemed like forever, it only lasted a year!

My shame about being with Anna was principally owing to my religious mother, and my early years in the church. How I hated sitting on

those hard wooden benches, listening to those sermons. They all seemed little more than commonsense, except for the miracles and the heaven and hell stuff, which seemed like fantasy, designed to convince you to believe. It wasn't till age sixty-five, when I began to write this windy mess, that I started to tell people about my relationship with Anna. Mom and the church, indirectly demanded I feel shame and humiliation, and I did, yet not enough to stop me seeing the highly erotic Anna. That would have been like damming-up Niagara fall, with a cork. As I said, in those days, I hadn't a genuine conscience, and still only have a smidgeon.

My time with Anna was beyond sublime, but seeing her only once a week wasn't nearly enough; it was nothing sort of maddening. Besides learning about Anna's sexual likes and dislikes, she taught me various other things: very personal things about her family and friends, as well as significant details concerning the unusual proclivities of her gentlemen callers. Some of which coincided with the more puzzling photos I'd seen in the porno magazines, while collecting coke bottles, behind the enlisted barracks, as a six year old. At first, I thought Anna

was lying about much of what she described, but I came to realize she wasn't, and there were some light horizontal scars on her gorgeous ass cheeks to prove it. *Show and tell in elementary school was never like Anna!* After all, some of her clients were American military officers from the base, a couple of which Dad and I knew very well, and so, as stated, both she and I wanted to keep our relationship a secret. Her clients were all married and never came to her humble house, but rather she'd take a cab to meet them, at a hotel room, or at one of their other houses, where the wife and kids weren't present.

Years later, I'd go to an all male military academy for my high school, where I'd frequently sit in the library and read the writings of Sigmund Freud, which caused me to recall many of the things which Anna had told me about her clients. Yet even then at the ripe old age of sixteen, much of Freud's musings on sadomasochism seemed too strange, ergo I thought Freud had simply made them up. Later, I was told that Freud had wanted to be a neurophysiologist, yet back then, the brain research techniques weren't advanced enough to provide him with the answers he sought, concerning the workings of the human mind. Consequently, he opted for being

a psychoanalysis, ergo a lot of his assumptions/ conclusions were simply wrong, while others were indeed accurate. Needless to say, psychoanalysis is far from being an exact science, and prone to error. It's nothing more than three pounds of mush making educated guesses, and in my opinion doesn't qualify as a science. It's my subjective opinion that over ninety percent of the people, who become psychologists and psychiatrists, have some serious psychiatric imbalance, themself; no less than three standard deviations out from the norm.

Anna was the kind of rare and refreshingly open person, which I had only suspicioned existed; someone, who was willing to share almost everything, regardless of what the listener might think. I've always enjoyed such people. She could go from being down and depressed to euphoric in a brief moment. Unlike me, Anna couldn't keep a secret, other than the fact that she was too embarrassed to mention her relationship with me. For some reason, she got off on being with a child, and copious amounts of vaginal fluid, as well as moans and screams attested to the fact she legitimately did. No-one soaks a mattress, faking it. Back then, and even without the sex, she was the best thing that had ever

happened to me, principally because she was so candid, and I loved that about her. No adult, or child for that matter, had ever divulged so many personal things to me. Such openness was an aphrodisiac. Perhaps, as much as her sex, her revealing the details of her life, intrigued me. Now days, people tend to be overly concerned with being politically correct, and so they're boring! For a while, the visits were just sex, but then one day, she stunned me, asking me to stay for a meal. I was pleased but shocked. After that first meal, it became a routine, where she'd usually cook for me, and we'd eat in her tiny kitchen. Sometimes, I'd cook us an omelet. That was the only cooking thing I taught her… how to make a great omelet. My trick was to use two spatulas to flip it closed. It was the only dish I knew how to prepare. Mom had taught me. For me, the tricks to making a perfect omelet were to not get too greedy with its contents, as well as to not to beat the eggs too much, with the fork, resulting in the egg becoming foamy.

Anna told me how and why she'd become a prostitute. There was a small amount of pride that came with that discussion, since her life as a prostitute wasn't exactly risk free. Her mother had been forced into prostitution, due to Spain's extreme

post war poverty. Her biological father had been a field hand, and had married Anna's mom, before the war began, in 1930. When the war ended Anna was about five, and her father had been killed. She had no recollection of either event. Once Anna reached the age of thirteen, one of her mother's kindlier customers offered more money for Anna, than the poverty stricken mother could refuse, ergo Anna was gently but rudely introduced into the trade. She told me that her legs shook in fearful anticipation, and that she had repeatedly told the man how afraid she was, then afterwards she had desperately loved the older rich man, but he soon moved to some unknown location in Italy, which she said broke her heart. She told me that all women fall in love with the first man, if he's half decent in bed. She also told me about how a woman feels concerning her period, and to remember that the only thing, which should make me hard, was beauty, and not those other 'crazy' things, which ostensibly aroused her atypical male clients. Anna was a born teacher about life.

"Beauty is what should excite you, Joey. But if you become not interested in a woman, then she was not for you. You move on to another pretty one. Be nice how you leave her, say nice things, but don't

worry… just leave, but no feel guilty. Beauty should be the only thing makes you hard, down there… only beauty, not some crazy shit stuff." Thus spoke the alluring female Sigmund Freud of prostitution.

At times, I saw her as a kindred spirit, a credulous child, and I wondered if having sex so young had maybe stopped the maturation process of some part of her brain, or was she trying to play down to me, a child. She certainly didn't have the serious maturity of my parents. Nevertheless, in many ways she was bright. After all, she had to perform for about seven or eight different men, and Anna was a superb card player.

She knew I was extremely attracted to her, as only a twelve year old boy could be, and in her own strange way, perhaps she might have loved me. Frequently, she used me as a sounding board, concerning her more unusual clients, and sometimes as a confessional, for sometimes she hated herself. Periodically, she told me, about the various things she'd stolen from her clients, occasionally enlisting the help of a gypsy child, she knew to be skilled shop-lifters. Using a child made it appear that it couldn't have been her who'd committed the theft. She'd tell the kid what the item was and where in the

house it was located, then she'd simply leave a window or door unlocked. According to Anna, the most valuable item, she personally stole was a man's ring with a five carat perfect diamond. For covert purposes, she'd removed the large diamond from its' setting, and reset it herself, before fencing it. After acquiring a few items, she'd go on vacation, and fence the items where she vacationed. If the items were not too unique, she'd fence them at antique stores, since the antique dealers would buy almost anything they could turn for a profit. Anna had learned to steal from her mother. To this day, I think she told me nearly everything. As a rule, Anna didn't steal from her regulars.

Anna's biggest fears were poverty, pregnancy, loss of beauty, going to hell, and people finding-out about me. Even though she teased me, about getting her pregnant, it was Anna that was most afraid of having a child, not me. She said that she knew that she wouldn't have been a good mother. Later, when I got married, I flipped-flopped, and feared having kids. More than likely, I could have impregnated Anna, since very now and then the condom would break, and most males begin producing viable spermatozoa, between ages ten to twelve. Whenever

she realized that I had cum in her, she'd freak-out, and run to the bathroom for an emergency douche. It was easy to tell when the condom broke, since suddenly the sex felt so much better.

Back then in Spain, the banks didn't pay any interest, much as is the case in America, today. There was no way for poor people to play the stock market, so the only ways the poor had to prepare for old age was to either save-up a ton of money, or start a business, or to have kids and hope that the kids would take care of them, when they got old. Anna claimed to be Catholic, yet she never attended church; still, she seemed to fear hell, since she was forever bringing it up. Also, she'd repeatedly say that she couldn't afford to support both the church and herself. The Catholic church seriously condemned prostitution but Anna claimed that St. Augustine approved of her profession. Underneath it all, Anna was kind and good; at least, she was to me. Without Anna, I'd have grown-up in a more convention manner, and have had a relatively boring childhood.

All my time with her was spent inside her little house on the outskirts of Puerto, and always with her tawny roller shades pulled down. Otherwise, I only saw her at the pigeon shoots, but there, we didn't

acknowledge each other. While I was visiting Anna's home, if someone happened to knock on her door, which happened only a handful of times, Anna would yell through the closed door that she was sick, and to go away. Only once did we go somewhere together. We went to Seville on the bus. She rode in the back of the bus and I rode in the front, but once we were in the city, we went everywhere together. I even held her hand, and no doubt people thought I was her kid or very much younger brother. First, we went to fence a few of her stolen items. She told the antique dealers I was her visiting younger brother, from Valencia. Later, we strolled the streets, ate at the sidewalk cafes, and got drunk in a bar. Because of her staggering beauty, we got free booze, from the bartender. We had to run not to miss the return bus to Puerto. Other than that brief trip, we never went anywhere together. Considering my twelve years of age, and the corresponding sexual energy, we spent much of our time engaged in sex; otherwise, we slept, ate, drank, and now and then, I read to her.

On the base, much of my day-to-day was spent trying to figure out how to procure Anna's weekly gift. She never demanded the gift, but still, I felt obliged, per our initial arrangement; plus, I enjoyed

seeing her reaction to the gift. Not all of my dealings to secure Anna's gift were honest. Sometimes I'd trade one of Dad's bottles of scotch for other things, which I thought she'd enjoy. She loved wine, perfume, and certain pieces of high quality costume jewelry. I'd buy the jewelry, at some second-hand shop in Cadiz or Jerez, saying that it was for my Mom. In Puerto, I could trade a single bottle of top-shelf scotch for several items, which I could then use for Anna's gifts. A single bottle of fine scotch could bring me thousands of pesetas in store credit. So, on those mornings that I'd visit Anna, I'd stop by the store and pick-up something for her. A few times, I'd simply sell the bottle at a card club, or a bar, and the town had plenty of those. The love of gambling and booze knows no borders, except for certain muslim countries, but muslims, who travel abroad do often indulge. For the rest of my time in Spain, I constantly looked forward to my visits with Anna.

At that time in my life, I was reading about one book per week. Most of the books were hand selected by Mom. The majority of them were biographies and autobiographies about historical figures, famous: politicians, generals, musicians, adventurers, doctors, etc. Realizing that Anna was going to ask me to give

her an account of the book caused me to try to better remember the contents. In addition, I'd read to her, those portions of the text, which I considered most interesting. She clearly loved to be read to. While she was an avid reader of books in Spanish, those in English were too difficult for her, so she'd lay naked on her back, her head on the pillow, legs straight, ankles crossed, with her fingers laced over her bellybutton, and just listen to me read.

After sex and a meal with Anna, sometimes I'd wash-up, and go to the bullfights, or I'd head home. Anna would generally go back to sleep, or go shopping. She lived to shop. Sex with Anna was so easy; no courtship, and none of the myriad of complexities, which most my later conventional relationships possessed. Life and sex with a prostitute was incredibly carefree at age twelve, and made my dating years seem comparatively awkward, if not, arduous. In those days, the male was expected to jump through various hoops, before engaging in sex, but after being with Anna, such efforts seemed frivolous. Nevertheless, when I didn't want to jump through those social hoops, which most teen girls expected, my indifference actually seemed to attract them.

Anna's tiny wooden house was slightly recessed back from a row of homes, and fortunately it was at the end of the row, so she only had one neighbor, making it ideal for me to get in and out, without being seen. I'd casually walk out of the nearby tree-line, dressed like a poor Spanish kid, so if anyone had seen me, Anna could simply say I was delivering something, and my weekly gift would have sufficed as the delivered item. Before leaving the woods, I'd carefully check-out the few nearby homes, making sure no one was watching, then I'd move quickly. I don't believe anyone ever noticed me going to and from her home.

Back then, there didn't seem to be any genital herpes, though perhaps people just didn't discuss it. Herpes as likely been around for thousands of years. There are two basic types: Type I and Type 2. Though Type I is primarily found on the mouth, and Type 2 on the genitals, either type can be found in either location. Most people have both types even though they may not show symptoms. Anna never gave me any disease, that I know of. Emperor Tiberius reigning from around 14 to 37 AD, appears to have attempted to ban kissing in Rome, because of the prevalence of cold sores. The term 'herpes

simplex' was first spoken of in Richard Boulton's publication, 'A System of Rational and Practical Chirurgery (1713). The disease wasn't found to be owing to a virus, until the 1940s. During my days with Anna there was no *HIV,* but there was gonorrhea and syphilis, and syphilis can even be spread by kissing. To the best of my knowledge, I never contracted any of these diseases, but every so often, Anna would give me an envelop of pills, with instructions for me to take them. She'd say, they were to be taken, 'just in case.' She didn't need to elaborate what that meant. She'd also stress not letting my parents find the pills, or if they did, to just say that I'd found them. These pills were no doubt antibiotics, she'd purchased at a Spanish drugstore, and without a script.

Anna was indeed nervous about being seen with me, and she went crazy, when she found out that my Dad was the executive officer of the base; it seemed to literally terrify her. She made me repeatedly promise never to mention our relationship. Perhaps her surprise was not genuine, but just a cover for the fact that she'd already talked with Mr. White. To this day, I remain uncertain as to whether Mr. White and my Dad knew about my relationship with Anna.

Now, my Dad has passed-on, so I guess I'll never know. What finally ended my relationship with Anna was the impending death of her fifty year old mother, in Valencia, located on the East coast of Spain, about four hundred miles from the base. At that time, it was Spain's third or fourth largest city.

One cold Friday in mid spring, Anna received a letter from her stepdad, which rather bluntly stated that Anna's mother was deathly ill, and that Anna needed to come home immediately. The letter from the stepdad was printed, as if it was written by a child. The words seemed cold, without any hint of good will, and that letter ended my relationship with her. Anna never returned, and she sure as hell couldn't send me a letter, not even via a third party, since she didn't want anyone to know about us. Before she departed for Valencia, we had sex, then soaked in her big bathtub, and as a parting gift, she fixed me a big plate of bacon and eggs. I'd brought her a pair of nylons and a pair of tan calfskin gloves. Strange as it may sound, my relationship with the Anna, in many ways still seems more genuine, than many I've known since. It truly shocked me when she cried, as I left to go home that evening. They seemed like real tears, not like my mother's. Some women

use tears to simply get what they want, but not Anna. To get her way, she used her beauty and sex. Although Anna occasionally stole from her clients, and was a prostitute, in many ways she was more honest, than most wives. After all, when she spent money, it was her own, and the only time I saw her cry, was at the end of our last visit.

Years before, Anna had left her home in Valencia, because her stepfather had been psychologically abusive. The only physical abuse he delivered was when he killed her dog. He'd hit it in the head with a shovel, because it supposedly growled at him, but Anna said she didn't think her dog had growled. There might have been more to the stepdad story, but I didn't ask. Why make someone relive their misery? Only psychologist like to do that sort of nonsense. Certainly, if a person suffers with a neurosis, due to a consciously unrealized stressor, it might be beneficial to reveal it, but otherwise such revelations seem counterproductive. There are certain types of people, who never seem to be satisfied with inconclusive statements. Sometimes, I'm guilty of such, but not that time. Anna dearly loved her mom, and so she packed-up and left, within three days of having received her stepfather's

letter. It was a ten-hour bus ride to Valencia. Anna was going strictly for her mom's sake. The letter made me realize that Anna was far more intelligent than her stepfather. Her handwriting was a beautiful flowing script, with a near forty-five degree slant. As a child, her handwriting impressed me. She said she'd been tutored by the Catholic nuns, but dropped-out of school at age fourteen, to pursue her carnal career. Prior to dropping-out, she'd been a top student.

Quite likely, her leaving for Valencia contributed to my alcohol-induced suicidal depression. Without Anna to look forward to, my life seemed boring. How lucky I was to have her, for the time I did! The Sunday after Anna had left, I still went to her house, hoping that she might have returned, but the landlord was there selling-off Anna's furniture, since she'd failed to pay her last month's rent. I wanted some kind of memento, but since she'd skated on the rent, the landlord was too angry to let me in the house, so I just picked-up a light tan pyramidal shaped rock from her front yard; after all, a memento is just that.. a memory trigger. I still have that rock, and keep it in an antique glass drum table in my garage. If anyone asks why I have the rock, I just say

it was a souvenir from Gibraltar… ‘a rock from the rock,’ I lie. Anna was unencumbered sex, as well as a genuine confidant, without all the pressures that a normal mature relationship brings with it. It was a relationship which was not to be socially condoned, but it was passionate, fun, and comfortable. Everything Anna taught me continued to participate, throughout my life’s relationships.

Inside the shooting club was a forty foot curving mahogany bar, with a long wavy mirror, along its back wall. I’ve never known if the mirror was purposely made that way, or it was just poorly made. On the wall opposite the bar was a huge gray and brown stone fireplace, which in the colder winter months, consistently had a roaring fire. The stone fireplace was so large that a full grown man could stand-up inside it, and it was about four feet deep. The inside of the fireplace was lined with blackened firebricks. The fireplace stones looked like gray and brown misshaped cannonballs the size of soccer balls. The floor was covered in heavily glazed dark brown titles, on which were situated a dozen round wooden tables, each with four to six chairs.

Coming in from the cold, the firelight would play off the glazed tiles, and the huge irregularly surfaced

mirror behind the bar. The fire dependably heated the club, but in the winter, the bathrooms, at the end of the hallway, generally remained cold. Roughly the same number of tables were situated outside on the giant stone patio, just behind and overseeing the grassy shooting field. All the tables, inside and outside, were covered with heavy starched white linen table cloths. Anna occasionally took advantage of the long tablecloths to cordially place her toes in some man's crotch. She could be carrying-on a seemingly serious conversation with one man, while stimulating another, and playing a hand of poker or chinchón. In addition, she'd be manipulating the group dialogue with her subtle, and not so subtle, comments and mannerisms. Spellbinding beauty certainly has its' privileges.

The food was served on plain white bone china, and eaten with heavy sterling silver utensils. Of course, silver was only seventy three cents an ounce, back then. The meal generally had only three tasty selections, some type of fish, fowl, or red meat dish, which came with various vegetables and bread. The hot meals were consistently sumptuous. Dessert was always pie or cake. There was never any ice cream or diary products, since it was rumored that the Spanish

cows carried bovine tuberculosis, which still goes on in Spain, with 687 bovine tuberculosis (bTB) breakdowns found in Spain, between 2009 and 2011. Sad to say, people can contract bovine tuberculosis.

At that shooting club, I never became a world class shooter, but I did become a world class consumer of fine bourbon. Moreover, I ate enormous amounts of delicious food. I think I won the 1959 and the 1960 Olympic gold medal for booze and food consumption, without gaining a pound. At the ages of eleven and twelve, I had the metabolism of a runaway bullet-train, even when sleeping.

The waiters at the shooting club were all the darker skinned Andalusians, and wore what looked like specially tailored black bolero jackets, with flat shiny brass buttons, heavily starched white shirts, black slacks, and polished black leather shoes. They usually carried a pressed white linen towel neatly folded, and draped over their left forearm. Most of them wore their brownish black hair fairly long and combed straight back from their forehead. Back then, the poorer Spanish males often used a wet bar of soap to hold their hair in place. They'd just hold the bar of soap under the tap water, then rub it over their hair, and comb it straight back. A bar of soap

was certainly cheaper than hair gel in poverty stricken Spain, and probably more sanitary. Later that evening, the guys would use the soap, which had been in their hair all day, to bathe with. Once, when we were soaking in the tub, Anna had told me about this soap-in-the-hair trick, then she ran the bar of soap through my hair, and then combed my hair straight back. Looking in the mirror, I was surprised how much more sinister I looked with my hair combed thusly.

On the wall, opposite the long straight mahogany liquor bar, next to the massive fireplace, was a black chalk board. It was approximately eight feet tall and twenty feet long, firmly screwed to the wall. The kind one might find in an old fashioned university classroom. Down the left hand side of the chalkboard would be listed the names of all the competing shooters for each event, usually around fifteen to twenty shooters. It cost roughly fifty cents to enter an event, plus each bird was about the equivalent of a nickel. Every time a shooter killed a bird, an X would be placed to the right of his name, so if a guy killed, for example ten birds, there'd be a horizontal line of ten Xs to the right of his name. When he missed, an O was placed at the end of the string of Xs, and he

was then out of the running, at least until the next event. The score-keeping on the large blackboard was managed by a man, who stood on the steps of a four foot tall A-framed ladder on wheels. The man fell once, and so he was fired, and after that, the club switched to using a ladder without wheels.

No women were allowed to shoot, since southern Spain was then highly sexist, and women were generally thought to be vastly inferior to men, excluding certain socially astute prostitutes, such as Anna. Evidently, none of the males had heard of Annie Oakley of the wild west, or Ms. Klaudia Kalugina, the famous female Soviet sniper, who shot and killed 257 Axis soldiers in WWII. My bet is that one day her story will be worth Hollywood screenwriter's attention.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klavdiya_Kalugina

In that respect, the Andalusians were only a few clicks (a 'click' is a kilometer, or .62 miles) away from their ancestors, the Islamic Berbers, which then lived in scattered groups and communities across the Straits of Gibraltar in: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia,

Libya, Egypt, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania. The word Gibraltar comes from the Arabic ‘Jabal Tariq,’ which means the mountain of Tariq. Tariq was the Arab, who first lead the invasion from Spain, hundreds of years prior. That particular name is used to indicate someone who travels at night — a night visitor, if you will. Likely, the Arabs of North Africa might have found it convent to travel at night, since the days were often scorching hot out on the desert of north Africa. The word mountain (Jabal) was used in the name, because Gibraltar looks like a rock mountain. When I went there, with the aforementioned American Jewish commander, Barbary apes, roamed around parts of the rock, and would walk up to people and boldly steal their wallets, drinks, jewelry, pocketbooks, etc. If you saw an ape coming in your direction, you were wise to check your belongings, to make sure that you had nothing, which it could take from you. The steal anything which was no nailed down. The apes were fairly fearless, and if they got too close, you’d best kick or punch, since they’d frequently try to do you harm. A bite from an ape could be serious.

Besides the two Moroccans, every now and then, an Arab would travel up from Africa to participate in

the pigeon shoots. Generally, the Arabs behaved in an overly formal manner, and never once did they belly-up to the bar, nor did they speak with any of the prostitutes, and the prostitutes avoided them, at least there in the public eye. Anna later told me that the Arabs enjoyed drinking and the attentions of prostitutes, but as a rule, they wanted to remain extremely secretive. They lived in great fear of anyone finding-out about them. According to Anna, their religious leaders were unforgiving about such things. Back then, in certain Arab countries, a person caught stealing, could have their hand chopped-off, and person who committed adultery could be beheaded, or stoned to death. There was also cross-amputation for certain thieves, the right hand and the left foot, were both cut off. There are passages in the Quran, which some Arabs feel condone such; personally, I'm not so sure of that.

When the Lord inspired the angels (saying) I am with you. So make those who believe stand firm. I will throw fear into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Then smite the necks and smite of them each finger. Quran (8:12)

Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve,

then it is smiting of the necks until, when ye have routed them, making fast of bonds; and afterward either grace or ransom 'til the war lay down its burdens. Quran (47:4)

Sturdy wooden gun racks, padded with soft red and green felt, and filled with various expensive shotguns, lined the walls of the clubhouse, as well as stood outside on the edges of the back patio, near the shooting field. Moreover, some guns would be propped-up against the tables, and ammo belts were routinely draped over the backs of chairs. All the Americans, who attended, were from the naval base, and the Spaniards were from wealthy families, often associated with either Spain's small defense industry, or a large farm, or one of the local vineyards. Even though many poor people worked at the club, never was a weapon stolen, at least not to my knowledge.

Men freely bought, sold, and traded guns in the clubhouse. Sometimes, guns ended-up on the poker table, as part of a bet. Likely, this place was somewhat akin to the American Wild West of the mid 1800s. The men all drank and carried guns, yet there was never a problem with a weapon being used inappropriately, nor was there an accident. However,

one mishap did occur, very nearly killing a man, and that mishap was my fault, and yet no one found fault with me.

The pigeon shoots were held on a well-manicured green grass field, quite similar in size and shape to an American baseball field. The shooter would stand on a well worn concrete pad, situated in the positional equivalent of home plate. Out in front of the shooter were five green metal boxes, equally spaced, and situated on a gradual curving arc, so each box was about sixty feet from the shooter. There was about twenty-five feet of distance between each of the five boxes. Every one of the five metal boxes held an extremely fast racing pigeon. This was a modern replay of the aforementioned birds-under-the-hats shooting events of 1750 England, only with electronically controlled outwardly collapsing metal boxes, replacing the hats, and the bird were much slower in 1750.

From the shooter's perspective, if he were standing on home plate (the aforementioned concrete pad), one metal box was about the distance and angle of third base, one box on second base, and one box on first base. The other two metal boxes were evenly spaced between those three. All five boxes

were on an arc, equidistance from the shooter. About a hundred feet further out from the arc of five metal boxes, was a curved, two foot tall, white wooden fence… the outfield fence, so to speak.

When the hyperactive speedy feathery fowl emerged from one of the boxes, the shooter was allowed two shots to kill it, before it could fly over the outfield fence. If the bird-managed to get over the fence, even if it glided over dead, it was ruled a miss. Consequently, in pigeon shooting, speed and accuracy were paramount. The two shots of bourbon were my edge, and slowed me down just enough, so I could maintain a modicum of accuracy. The booze seemed to keep me from over-swinging the barrel, and shooting too far past the pigeon.

That may sound contrary, to what one is normally learns about alcohol, yet it was indeed the way the booze beneficially worked for me. Likewise, drinking with Anna did nothing to slow the sex drive. It worked the same way, when I shot skeet or trap on the base. Again, the booze kept me from over shooting the target. In my case, it may have been logical, since my childhood brain had developed, while on booze. To a large degree, the brain's *cerebellum* (meaning 'little brain,' since it looks like a

smaller brain behind the larger cerebral cortex) fine tunes our ability to move. In the 'little brain' there are various excitatory and inhibitory neurons (nerve cells). Both groups of cells are important in executing fine motor control, as is clearly needed in competitive shooting. And again, my brain's center for fine motor control, my cerebellum, had developed while under the daily influence of alcohol. I was a daily drinker from the age of six months till age twelve.

Certain of the excitatory neurons fire to initiate and continue the muscle movement, and some of the inhibitory neurons fire to modulate, or slow down the speed of those muscle cell contractions, so it's not too fast and you don't over shoot the target. My excitatory neurons apparently needed some bourbon to be slowed a tad, probably because the inhibitory neurons just didn't do enough inhibiting, or the alcohol had killed off too many of them. The alcohol-induced loss or death of inhibitory neurons may also account for my poor sleep habits.

Behind the shooter, where the umpire might stand in a baseball game, stood the man, who pressed the button to randomly select one of the five metal boxes, which would then open to release its' bird.

The shooter would walk out onto the concrete platform (home-plate), load two shells into his gun, close the weapon, keep the shotgun at waist level, but pointed down. Then, the man with the button would ask the shooter, if he were ready. When the shooter replied, “pajaro, (bird)” the button would be pressed, and one of the five boxes would be randomly selected by the electronics, and instantly the walls of said box would fall outward, releasing the racing pigeon, which would abruptly go into rapid fairly unpredictable flight; meaning that there were often a lot of sudden chances in the bird’s direction of flight. The initiation of the swift erratic flight was better assured, because simultaneous with the walls of the metal box collapsing outward, a mechanical arm, on the side of the box, would fling a light-weight wooden or cork ball at the bird, inspiring the fowl to go airborne. These feathered creatures were especially bred for their speed and undivinable flight.

The wilder the flight of the bird, the more assured its’ survival.

Aelroy M. Wills

Moreover, all the roller-pigeons had been bred out of that breed, lest they drop back onto the field, uninjured, if the shot missed. If a roller pigeon was released, it would have almost guaranteed the shooter another chance. In Spain, the bulls were bred for strength, agility, and their killing instinct, but birds were bred for their speed and fickle mercurial flight. The type of pigeon was the 'zurito' (*Columba oenas*). Humans do so love to manipulate animal genetics. We even manipulate the DNA of one celled animals, with our use and abuse of antibiotics, e.g., methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE), multi-drug-resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MDR-TB), carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) gut bacteria, etc.

Due to the massive over population of humans, directly or indirectly, every animal specie, both domestic and wild, has been forced to endure our influence on their long nucleotide sequences; especially the aforementioned microbes; so much so, that one day, some drug resistant strain may kill us all off. Maybe one day soon, everyone will dress like the astronauts to avoid infection. Of course, that will definitely be good for the earth and its' animals, and

bad for humans. This is provided that global warming doesn't do us in, before some drug-resistant disease does. It's sort of like big Pharma and the coal burning power industries are racing to see, who can be first to kill-off all the humans. Do we die, suffering with some incurable disease, or are we gassed by hydrogen sulfide, bubbling-up from the ocean bottoms, where the anaerobic bacteria are feasting on the massive amounts of dead plankton; plankton which bloomed and so stripped the surface water oxygen, so it died and sank to the bottom. Take your pick: suffering the agonies of a disease, or inhaling poisonous hydrogen sulfide! If things get to be too much to handle, there's always suicide, but the religions have put the nix on that option. Ask yourself the question, which political party allows the most pollution, which party would be most likely to allow a pandemic to ramp-up, putting money and business interests over public health, and which party has the most religious conservatives? And so, which political party is most apt to be the party of misery and greed?

Having uttered the word "pajaro, (bird)" the shooter would next quickly raise the gun to his shoulder, spot the bird emerging from one of the

collapsing metal boxes, tract, aim, and fire; hopefully, killing the bird, as quickly as possible. If the shooter missed with the first shot, he was allowed a second. Generally, the birds accelerated so fast, that you'd have to lead the bird by a couple of feet, but that would also depend on the angle of flight. If the bird was flying directly away, so I was looking at the bird's tail-end, there was no need to lead, but that usually wasn't the case. If the bird was flying directly away from the shooter, it was an easier shot, because the shooter didn't have to swept the barrel as far left or right.

Once the bird was shot and dead on the ground, an attendant would run out onto the smooth grassy field, and retrieve it. Those dead birds were kept in the walk-in cooler over-night, then taken and sold in the market, early the following morning. I was familiar with the city, since I bought coins there, and one of my best buyers, an old retired British RAF ace, who'd fought in the battle of Britain. The Brit hung-out in a couple of interesting clubs featuring flamenco dancers. Those flamenco clubs had an air of seriousness about the dance. Stepping inside said clubs, the people and the music, seemed to exude a solemn love of dance, and an ancient culture. Much

of the accompanying music contained the mysterious minor notes, found abundantly in Arabic music. The best flamenco dancer I ever saw was at the *Rocio Flamenco* cave in Granada, Spain. The dancer was a guy named Antonio Gades. I'd gone to Granda with my parents, and when they'd gone to sleep in the hotel room, I snuck-out in search of alcohol, and ended-up at the *Rocio Flamenco* cave. The patrons and the other dancers were riveted to the guy, who in 1960, looked to be in his early twenties. He was a very skinny fellow, and not too tall, but he moved in a powerfully deliberate, yet fluid, fashion, making the dance seem reflective and effortless, as if he was born with the ability. I remember his name, because everyone started chanting his name, demanding that he take the floor, and it was more than clear that women were crazy about the guy.

About a third of a mile away, from the shooting club, across a huge open field, was the long edge of some woods. If a bird escaped the two shots, a few of the poverty stricken Spanish farmers would be waiting, just inside the edge of the trees, armed with their ancient shotguns. They'd barely step-out from the tree-line to shoot down the escaping pigeon, for their evening supper. Usually by the time the bird

was soaring above the farmers, it was about one hundred feet up, and flying fast and straight, without the aforementioned erratic maneuvers, it normally displayed, when it was first coming-up off the ground. Being motivated by poverty-induced hunger, rather than sport, the older farmers would shoot almost straight-up to bring down the high flying fowl. They'd nail the bird about half the time. The elderly gents killed for food; whereas, we at the shooting range killed for fun. Maybe I should have said that we killed for 'sport;' but either way, call it fun or sport, it was some satisfying little group of neurons popping-off in response, to ending an animal's life. Suffice it to say, there is such a part of the brain, for many people. The existence of that portion of gray matter makes sense, for there undoubtedly have been times in the history of the human race, when killing meant obtaining food, or getting rid of a deadly enemy. Maybe that group of nerve cells is why movies with lots of gratuitous violence are so successful in the box-office. Perhaps, it was James Shelly who said that, "Sheer happiness for happiness' sake leads to numbness." Maybe he had something going there. I must admit there are several ways one can interpret Shelly's words. You decide, for ultimately you're going to use your gray

matter to assess such things, if not all things. Aren't you?

The spoken or written words are only the allusion of knowledge, a vibrational or printed representation of someone's understanding. A more accurate form of comprehension is the involved brain circuitry, not just the quivering of some ear drums, or light passing through the cornea.

Brain Damage and The High Five by Dr. M. O'Weary

One morning, Mr. White and I had arrived early at the shooting club. It was about an hour before the shoot was to start. So with nothing to do, Mr. White bellied-up to the bar to past the time talking to the bartender, while I walked outside then across the open field out into the distant woods, where stood the small group of old Spanish farmers, dressed in their raggedy clothes. Compared to the expensive weapons at the pigeon shoot club, their old fashioned weapons were quite crude, and worn. Surprisingly, one of their shotguns was a single shot, and used the old percussion cap, a muzzle loader, with a

remarkably long and thick barrel for a shotgun! *Good for long range…* The percussion cap weapons had come into existence around the 1820s. The farmer, who owned the old muzzle loader caught me gawking at his weapon, so he smiled and nodded. The men were plainly wondering why I'd walked across the field to meet with them. Being a professional liar, I was prepared with my fabrication. Of course, the real reason was to simply see what the old guys were like.

Though Spain had managed to remain neutral, during both WWI and WWII, their civil war had created more than its' share of death, destruction, and poverty. Their civil war had probably done more damage than had they been a participant in WWII. Lots of the older Spanish men were missing limbs, and wore various shades and shapes of scar tissue, with the worst of those scars sometimes being invisible. The civil war had only lasted three years, but had succeeded in bankrupting almost the entire nation. The only people who get rich from war, are those who manufacture and/or sell the weapons and related military equipment, and those, who partake in the spoils. America's revolutionary war (seven years), the war of 1812 (three years), the civil war

(four years), the first world war (four and one half years), the second world war (five years), etc., each of those wars made plenty of money for the involved military industries and their puppet politicians. Now, we have advanced technology, while our 'enemies' operate with vastly inferior equipment, and yet, the wars seem to last much longer. The war in Afghanistan has lasted since 2001, yet Afghanistan is a backwards country! Could it be that America actually wants the war to drag-out for the military industrial complex to make more money? If the Taliban is no longer buying all that opium from the poppy farmers, then who is? After all, the heroin problem hasn't gotten smaller, but it has grown like a weed. The war in Iraq, and the corresponding Isis conflict, has been going since 2003! Plus, at any particular time, the US has special operations troops in over seventy countries, and five hundred airborne drones at all times! As a result, the defense industries are rolling in dough, and swimming in blood.

War… an expensive funeral dirge, marched by a one legged blind man.

Killing for Dollars by Adrian Roy Miller

Once in positions of power, psychopaths, with their near limitless love of greed and human misery, inevitably dig-up flimsy reasons to go to war, anything to marginally fool the public, to make it appear that the war is absolutely necessary, morally just, righteous, and nothing short of a patriot's duty. When trying to gauge the psychopath's contrived motives for war, one must realize that half the public are living on the left side of the bellcurve, and that a good half of those on the right right just love the vicarious thrill of killing, ergo they are prone to respond to reasons with minimal logic. Hence, the masses usually swallow the fragile political excuse, hook, line, and sinker, along with half the fishing pole. Hell… some of them do their level best to jump into the boat. However, for their folly, and their love of violence, they often pay with their lives or limbs, or eyes, or genitals, or sanity, or with the lives of their family and friends; not to mention, that it is their tax dollars, which pay for all the butchery, which is usually somewhere on the other side of the earth.

Quite likely, none of the members from the elite shooting club had ever walked across the giant open field to the woods to meet those poor old farmers.

Aside from prostitutes, the rich of Spain tended to never socialize with the poor, unless it was to employ them and tell them what to fix, cook, clean, etc. Those penurious raggedy old gentlemen were extremely polite, and stoically proud. Intentionally, I had not brought my expensive weapon with me, not being so much concerned that it would be stolen, as I was worried that it might have carried the message, of economic superiority. A good first impression demands attention to the smallest of details, while making the encounter seem unplanned. Those honorable old guys were far from thieves. Tin cups in hand, they stood around a bed of coals, which had recently burned down from sticks and logs. Hardly any smoke was still rising. A long-handled gallon-sized thick walled aluminum pot was nestled in the embers, half full of steaming hot water, and there was a glass jar of what appeared to be powdered instant coffee sitting on the ground next to the fire. *There's no sugar or cream.* The men were more than sixty years of age, hence they were likely young combat veterans of the bloody Spanish civil war, and had remained united by their death-dealing memories. Their watchfulness and quiet reserve reminded me of Dad and his combat buddies. One sat on a wooden stool; his crutch and his shotgun

propped-up against a nearby tree. They all looked comfortable in their poverty, even the one gentleman on the stool, who was missing the lower half of his left leg, seemed content. Every-now-and-then, when I was at the shooting club, I'd see the amputee hop to the edge of the woods, prop against a tree, and wait for his chance to down a missed pigeon. The aged veterans took turns shooting. The edge of the woods, with the campfire, the long handled pot, and the jar of cheap coffee was their shooting club, the cost of membership was shares nightmares, and profound poverty.

The true nature of these men had nothing to do with their impoverished appearance. Just below the right eye of one man, his face was horribly sunk-in. *He must have been shot in the face!* It was one of those things which was hard to ignore; in effect. Though he was missing his cheekbone, the eye still tracked with the other. These were good men, who'd been thrown into the caldron of war; a struggle which had been generated for the profiting of a few politicians and industries. After the war, those vets had been sent back, to whatever was left of their homes. As their reward for military service, they got to keep their injuries, their memories, and their medals. Almost

universally, those men had bad teeth, and empty pockets. The Spanish civil war had transferred almost all the nation's wealth into the hands of the war industrialists, who had supplied the deadly accouterments of war, and did everything they could to help bring about the war.

Barring the very alluring Anna, Spain had taught me to look past people's physical beauty, and to realize that their bad teeth no longer seemed that important. Now, I find myself marveling at how much TV adverting goes into toothpaste and dental care, and how seminal the perfect smile is purported to be. After all, the loving Carmen's (my Mom's maid) teeth were something of a painful mess, yet the woman remained nothing short of a saint. Of all the people I've meant in my long life, I respect my Dad the most, and he possessed remarkably crooked lower front teeth, and he was missing a couple of back molars. Once during WWII, while flying over the pacific, his plane had been hit by antiaircraft fire. Dad had been forced to ditch in the Pacific, and had smashed his mouth, and injured his hip, ergo Dad's teeth were misaligned, and on cold days he sported a limp. Americans put so much stock in good looking teeth. How many movies have you seen, where the

protagonist has bad teeth? It's hard to find a Hollywood star with crooked or decayed teeth, ergo what does that say about Americans; besides the fact that they like people with good teeth? While there certainly are some, too many Hollywood stars and pop singers are not well known for their courage or integrity, and yet, so much of the American public worships them, while the actual heroes they portray, usually remain ignored, e.g., almost all the actual heroes of war go unnoticed, except for the occasional metal.

When I saw the well worn weapons, which the older Spaniards in the woods were using, I was glad that I had not brought-along my beautiful and expensive *Browning* double-barrel, lightning model, with its gold trigger. There I was, a twelve year old kid, who'd done nothing of any significance in life, and yet I owned a magnificent weapon, while these noble men of war, who'd laid their lives on the line for something they believed in, possessed junky excuses for guns. The bluing on their metal surfaces was long gone. Some of the bare shiny gray metal had areas of slight pitting, which made me wonder about the integrity of the gun's chambers and barrels. *How long before one of those guns blows-up, and kills*

one of them? The wooden stocks had long ago lost their smooth finish. In fact, one of the stocks appeared to have been split, along its length, and had apparently been repaired with glue and a hard brown twine, repeatedly and tightly wrapped around it. The tight wrappings of twine were varnished over, probably to add extra strength. Looking at the aged men, and their questionable weapons, made me recall the starving old stud horse, next to the abandoned little shack, and the kid who'd shot it. The kid was probably the polar opposite of those old men.

Out of respect and curiosity, I paid slightly too much to buy a half dozen of the Spanish farmer's home-made twelve gauge shotgun shells, and that purchase was why I'd walked across the huge field to talk to the old guys. I'd diplomatically lied and told them I was going to use their ammo, during the upcoming pigeon shoot, that afternoon, but for fear of damaging my gun, I didn't dare use their homemade loads. All I wanted with the shells was to later open them, and see what they contained.

Since the edge of those woods was almost five hundred yards from the shooting club, the old men couldn't possibly see what shells I ejected from my

gun. Moreover, I lied, telling them how impressed I was by their ability to bring-down the missed birds at such high altitudes, yet I was careful not to over do it, since a compliment born of pity, can be injurious.

All of their weapons, save for the aforementioned muzzle loader, were twelve gauges. While I wasn't even slightly impressed with their guns, ammo, or shooting abilities, I was very much moved by their stand-out trait of quiet strength, typically found in certain combat vets. Unlike most of the soldiers of today, during the Spanish civil war, a fair percentage of the soldiers used shotguns for street fighting. Now, the military shotgun is nicknamed 'the master-key,' and is primarily used as a breaching tool to open doors. Soldiers fire solid slugs at door locks and hinges, at near pointblank range to gain entrance.

That night, once I was home from that day's shoot, I examined the farmers old cardboard-sided reloaded shotgun shells. Evidentially, those humble men couldn't afford new shells, since the ammo had used casings. Most likely, the farmers reused them, until their cylindrical walls split. They had employed melted candle wax, and/or some type of glue to reseal the tops. I'm fairly certain that the men had reloaded the shells by hand, without mechanized

reloading equipment. Anna, who professionally knew the owner of the pigeon shooting club, had told me that on the days, when club was closed, and no one was around, those poor Spanish farmers would root through the club's smelly trash cans for discarded empty shell casings, to take home and reload. There's nothing quite like courageous combat vets having to search through the trash to make do. Too often, war veterans are abused, both before and after the war. Now days, politicians make a big show about taking care of our vets, but all the while, vets are sent on repeated deployments, until they loudly scream in their dreams.

That afternoon, after I'd downed my first pigeon, I gazed-out at the edge of the woods, and there stood one of the old farmers clearly watching me, so I waved and gave him a thumbs-up. In turn, he pumped his gun high in the air. The old farmer had assumed that his ammo had been successful; regardless of my deceit, I enjoyed the harmony. Some lies are good, and as repeatedly stated, lies were my specialty. Turning around, I was greeted by frowns from some of the wealthy club members, since with the old farmer's return gesture, I'd clearly overstepped a cultural boundary; nevertheless, I

knew that since I was a child, my transgression would be forgiven; still, I feared the farmer might be later reprimanded. Perhaps, he'd be banned from rooting through the club's trashcans, or maybe he wouldn't be allowed to shoot at the birds that got away. Later, Anna told me that the old farmer was never punished, although I think Anna had to 'negotiate' with the club owner to protect the old farmer.

That night, after my folks were sound asleep, I poured a couple of fingers of scotch, and went to sit outside on the back porch, while listening for the shore patrol jeep, which never came. Using my flashlight and pocketknife, I opened the farmer's shotgun shells, and poured-out their contents onto the concrete patio, then carefully examined it, with the flashlight. Inside the old cardboard casings, instead of the usual small spherical lead BBs of birdshot, which the farmers probably couldn't afford to buy, they'd used a variety of substitutes: small rusty screws, nuts and bolts, what looked like pieces of cut roofing nails, and even a few tiny hard pebbles. Undoubtedly, these were things they'd found, and didn't pay for. In place of the plastic wadding discs, which usually separated the lead

pellets from the gun powder, the farmers had used things like pieces of: canvas, cardboard, folded cloth, and plain white cotton. This made, sense for every now and then, when the pigeon shoot extended past sunset, I'd noticed bits of flaming material, coming out their gun barrels.

The gun powder which came out of those shells was not the type, which looked like the finely crafted, fast burning disks, but it was the old fashioned slower burning grainy rod-shaped style; the kind of powder which was dangerous to use, since it was highly corrosive to the bore of the weapon. It was the extremely cheap black powder, which had been imported into Spain from Egypt and Libya. Nevertheless, the older highly coercive gunpowder and cheap primers, were actually more dependable than the modern non-corrosive stuff… less misfires. Judging from telltale marks, and less than even surfaces, the primers appeared to have been manually pressed into the shell with crude tools, perhaps the back of a wooden spoon, a smooth piece of hardwood, or maybe with a simple vice. Now, there are two types of modern smokeless gunpowder: one made of nitrocellulose, and the other a combination of nitrocellulose and a lesser

amount of nitroglycerin. Everything about those old men seemed to radiate integrity.

If necessity is the mother of invention, desperation may be the father of creative survival.

Duck and Cover by Warren A. Morley

Gambling was one of the accepted norms in Spanish culture. Plenty of betting took place between the wealthy members of the shooting club, and each town in southern Spain had its' share of card clubs for the poor. At the shooting club, for some of the attendees, gambling seemed to have more appeal, than did the shooting. Spain not only had a national lottery, but the fact is that the Spanish National Lottery dates back almost 250 years (1763), before the birth of the United States! In those days, the europeans viewed the United States as a relatively new country.

The idea of a lottery isn't exactly a new one. Perchance, the earliest record of a lottery are the keno slips from the Han Dynasty of China, between 205 to 187 BC. Some historians have claimed that the ancient Chinese lottery was used to finance projects such as the Great Wall of China, built to

keep out the barbarians; but, for all the effort it took to build, it failed miserably. The barbarians were not to be deterred by a wall. Donald Trump, who's currently running for president of these United States, doesn't appear to be familiar with that portion of Chinese history. Of course, during this election, the states don't seem to be united. The red states tend to have the lesser educated citizens, and want the rich to get richer, and keep the wars going; whereas, the blue states, though better educated, want to keep welfare doling out the dough, which to a large extent seems to destroy too many people's incentive to work. In the process, this tends to dismantle the family unit, and promote crime, for once you lose self-respect, it's easier to lose respect for the law.

Ostensibly, America's state-lotteries are supposed to finance education, but I wouldn't bet that. Yes, some of the money probably does go to education, but only so that the politicians can then put less state funds into education, and more money into those programs which generate kickbacks, or gains them corporate favor at election time. Something tells me that most government controlled gambling is simply a means by which to remove money from the poorer

classes, since often there is a disproportionate amount of betting by the poor. Poor people are generally more desperate and less educated, and the less one's education, the less one is apt to appreciate the terrible odds the lottery provides. The lottery offers poor people a wretched form of hope, a distraction from how bad they're getting screwed, by their boss, by the cops, by their government, by welfare, and by those major corporations, who indisputably control the country. When you're poor, you tend to do more wishful thinking.

The most devastating war-induced poverty is not due to the destruction of war, but the cost of the war materials. The men who profit from war, usually walkaway unscathed, and rich beyond imagination.

The Final Pitch by Earl Y. Morrow

During the pigeon shoots, large sums of cash could be seen openly exchanging hands, sometimes based on the outcome of a single shot. Frequently, after shooting, I'd turn to see money changing hands. Occasionally, I'd even see a gun changing hands. One time, a guy won another man's car. Betting was not

only orthodox in Spain, but making a bet with someone was regarded as a friendly gesture, and it carried with it an expectation of decorum. As best I can recall, no one ever got mad about losing money, nor did they get overbearing or boastful about winning. While gambling was the accepted norm, poor behavior wasn't.

Occasionally, I too would bet a small amount, but I've never been one who gets a high from gambling, although my Dad was. The old Jewish commander had lectured me into oblivion against gambling, because I made the mistake of telling him about the gambling at the pigeon shoot. The commander had informed me that gambling was only to be engaged in, when you were the house and controlled the odds, or took a rake off each hand played.

At the club, I'd only bet to be sociable… the money was secondary; on the other hand, Mr. White was a major gambler, and a full fledged addict, but all and all, he probably came out ahead, since he was smart and never partook in organized gambling. Dad had supersaturated me in the art of poker. Between playing the game with Dad, and the old Jew's lectures about gambling, I was burned-out on

gambling by age twelve. Unlike the Spanish National Lottery, the gambling at the pigeon shoots was not controlled by the government. Today, most betting in United States is governmentally controlled. Just why is it, that the government is entitled to take a portion of the profits from gambling? Why does the state deserve its huge share of the state lottery; just cuz their greedy?

There are zillions of ways that the federal and state governments bleed money from individuals and businesses: liquor tax, cigarette tax, sales tax, communications tax, income tax, severance tax, gasoline and diesel tax, communications tax, highway tolls, jet fuel tax, property tax, corporate tax, professional job licensing fees up the kazoo, business licensing fees, estate taxes, car-truck-boat licensing, and the list goes on and on, till your wallet is empty. Some of the first phrases that a baby learns are things like: “Give me,” “I want,” and “mine.” These self-centered demanding words are the first sign of a baby’s developing ego, and nobody has an ego, as do the greedy thieving politicians of the world. While they do their level best to persuade us that they want to make the country, state, county, or city better, the real reasons they run are almost

always for power and to satisfy their greed.

The first Queen Elizabeth started the English lottery over four hundred years ago. Ever wonder what entitles today's Queen Elizabeth to live in such extravagant wealth, and with the English people happily paying for past symbols? Her grants-in-aid total to about £41.5 million per year! That pays for maintenance of: Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Clarence House, Kensington Palace, Holyrood Palace (in Edinburgh), plus a few other buildings. In addition, the money pays for staff and transportation expenses (a royal helicopter and a royal train; however, the jets flights are private charters). The Queen's living quarters on the train, look worse than a low-budget 1970s motel room, in some small country town, USA. It makes one wonder about whether the humble train compartment isn't some kind of propaganda sham. The Queen also has a significant income from the duchy of Lancaster. She does not have to justify the trips she makes. In addition, the Queen no doubt makes a substantial profit from her personal investments.

The average English citizen tends to revere the Queen, and I must admit from what I've been given to understand, she is indeed quite admirable, but

why is it that the comparatively powerless Queen needs to live in such profound luxury, partially at public expense? Perhaps, she embodies the essence of a back-up government, should the current one fail. Certainly, she'd likely be better qualified to run a government than is Hillary or Donald. It's hard to say, which governmental system (monarchs vs. prime ministers) has made the largest money grab from its citizens. Don't forget that there was a time, not too long ago, that the sun never set on the British Empire, and there was tons of slaughter and spoils to justify the never ending daylight. If you study world conquest, remember to get the opinions of the peoples, who were indigenous to the conquered lands.

In America, there is an inverse correlation between the amount of money one makes, and the proportionate amount of tax one pays. The poor pay proportionally far more in taxes, unless they are profoundly poor! The poor are also more apt to get audited! Besides, just imagine that you're an underpaid *IRS* investigator or attorney. Who would you rather tackle in court, Exxon with their unlimited wealth and highly adept tax attorneys, or your average tax dodger, who shows-up in court to

represent him or herself, without their receipts? There are two major categories of poor people: those who commiserate with each other, and look out for one another, much like the old Spanish farmers, out in the edge of the woods. Then, there's the lonely ones, who had been rich, and are depressed over losing their wealth.

Sadly, for the average US citizen, America's corporations are paying a much smaller share of governmental operations. In fiscal 2014, the feds collected about $321 billion from corporate income tax, less than 10.7% of its total revenue, and highly profitable mega corporations (large caps) pay even less tax, than do the smaller corporations. The large cap corporations pay less than 5%, and in some cases much less. Back in the 1950s, corporate taxes generated between 25% to 33% of the federal revenues, and corporate tax receipts haven't kept pace with the overall growth of the economy. Republicans love the idea of less tax for corporations, but more tax for the little guy. Their motto is 'All hale the mega rich and FTLG.' The reason for this inverse tax anomaly is, that as you go up the economic ladder, there are more and more republicans. Who would ever have guessed? If Trump

is elected, you can bet he'll chop corporate taxes even lower, and probably disguise this mega corporate benefit, with a minor cut in taxes for the middle and/or poor classes. Still, Hillary, who is backed by the rich Wall Street groups, will probably be forced to do pretty much the same. However, she'll still be required to somehow bolster-up the welfare recipients, so she can keep her voting base in tack, for the election of 2020. Though Donald doesn't seem as popular as Hillary, and will probably lose, he still might be able to carry the electoral college. At least, he's smart enough to hire brilliant people. Judging from his old TV show, The Apprentice, he seemed to sadistically enjoy firing people, more than he did hiring them. He was obviously better at criticizing people than complimenting them. For me, the way Donald pushes out his lips, is to give the impression of superiority.

As mentioned, by killing the pigeon was still inside the curved perimeter (outfield) fence, the shooter qualified to advance to the next round. The winner was simply the man with the greatest number of sequential pigeon kills. The prize was always cash, except at the annual grand shoot, where in addition to the money, the winner for that day, also received

some type of expensive new double barreled shotgun, inlaid with silver and/or gold; most often is was a *Beretta.* As a result of the prize, more shooters showed-up for the annual competition. Correspondingly, the price of drinks and food almost doubled. One thing I found disturbing about the club was that it lacked music. Perhaps, the left hemispheric gambling and shooting aren't well suited to music, which is largely in the right hemisphere.

During the annual shoot, the club would make considerably more money, ergo the cost of the fancy shotgun was comparatively nothing; and so, to increase their turnout and general profit, the club probably should have offered that prize a bit more often. It seemed to me that most of the club's profit came from selling top shelf booze. Three shots at the club cost about what Dad paid for an entire fifth. There's a real possibility that my Dad, with the assistance of Mr. White, supplied a fair portion of the club's booze. Being the 'annual winner' was considered a big deal. Often at the club, I'd notice someone pointing at, and mentioning that, someone had once been the annual shooting champion.

"That guy, over there by the fireplace, won the annual, two years ago! He won the prettiest *Beretta*

I've ever seen. I made it to fourth place that year." Someone might say.

The prize weapon was never one of the more modern semiautomatic shotguns, but always was an expensive, but conventional double barreled, usually an over-and-under, although every now and then it was a side-by-side. Semiautomatics were thought to be something of a sacrilege, lacking in a certain fairness. For its' defense, the bird only had its' blinding speed and its' hardwired erratic maneuvering. Weapons which carried more than two cartridges, as did the semiautomatics, represented a certain unfairness to the animal, allowing the unskilled hunter to appear to be skilled. Semiautomatics with their extra shots, allowed the unskilled shooter to fill the air with lots of shot, thereby making it next to impossible for the bird not to encounter at least a pellet or two, ergo those five shot semiautomatics seemed to bastardize the sport.

Unlike America today, back then in Spain, using a semiautomatic weapon was considered cheating. Most of us felt that a hunter shouldn't need more than two shots. It was believed that if a hunter couldn't make the kill in two shots, he didn't deserve the animal, and the animal had earned its freedom,

and hopefully it wasn't gravely wounded. The extra shots of the semiautomatic, plainly deprived the animal of a fighting chance. Why not just go hunting with fully automatic machine guns? Hell, why not throw hand grenades or shoot RPGs, or fly over in planes and pickle-off a couple two thousand pounders? Or, if you really want to do some serious big game hunting, why not just drop a few huge nukes, and take out the entire Serengeti ecosystem? Why do it, little by little? Why prolong the inevitable?

Even though, I no longer care about hunting, I still like the idea of the prey having an honest chance. Looking back, it seems fair to say that the animal's mere existence, mandates its freedom from such human influence. Perchance the time honored reduction in circulating testosterone, better allows the aged male brain to appreciate the beauty, and countless mysteries, of earth's fauna. There's no doubt that other life forms on earth would get along fine without the humans, but I can't say that the reverse holds true.

It's nothing short of astonishing, at how throughly blind greed can make a person.

Since only two shots were allowed, using a semiautomatic, loaded with just two cartridges, would have been a disadvantage, because the semiautomatics are much more prone to jamming. Double barreled shotguns rarely fail. If a double-barrel failed, it was almost always due to bad ammunition, not because of a weapon malfunction. Nevertheless, some competitors still preferred the semiautomatic, since sometimes there was less weight on the muzzle end of the gun. I preferred the weight of the double barrel, and I used its' momentum to reach my point of firing. Even today, the most preferred shotguns used for professional skeet and trap are probably the *Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon*, the *Browning Citori 725 Pro***,** and the *Winchester Model 101 Deluxe;* all three are double barrels, over and unders. If you check them out online, it's easy to see from their structure, that these guns are not too different from the gun I, and many others, used back in the late 1950s. It's the same with animals, once mother nature has a highly effective design, like the crocodile or the great white shark, there's no real need for additional change.

While I did manage to win a few shoots and some prize money, I never was close to being good enough to win the annual prize. Far too many highly skilled hopefuls came from all over Europe, as well as from Morocco and Algeria. As with life, there was never a reward for second place, except for a few people saying, ‘well done.’ At times, those words can be better than the prize. The day of the aforementioned mishap, the last shooting event of the day had stretched into the early evening, and there was no shooting allowed, after the sun had been down for thirty minutes. The blazing golden sun was perfectly balanced on the low rolling hills of the vineyards, which defined the distant western horizon.

When shooting, at the club, I always faced north, and so during sunset, I’d have to slightly squint my left eye. Furthermore, if the bird flew toward my left, I could lose it in the sun. Sunlight can be the curse of those of us born, without the light filtering benefit of brown irises. Luckily, I was still in the running, after twenty-two kills to my credit, but the longer I shot, without missing, the greater the psychological pressure. Mr. White wrongly assumed that he was encouraging me, by betting $500 on my twenty-third

pigeon. But, the strain of the shooting contest was getting to me, and his big wager only increased the unwanted pressure. Not to mention the fact, that Anna had come out of the clubhouse to watch me. She stood propped-up against the back outside wall, and purposely adjusted her stance, so the slit of her wrap-around dress opened more than halfway up her left thigh. This sexual gesture of encouragement, like the $500, only added to the pressure.

That last shoot of the day was the first time, I can recall feeling intense competitive pressure. The shot I was about to make, felt like the entire shooting club was watching me, and with Mr. White's big bet, and Anna's watching me, the pressure felt unbearable. *So, this is what competitive pressure is like!* Truly, I feared missing the bird, knowing that so much money rested on my shoulders, not to mention Anna's disappointment, if I missed. Only one other man, a tall dark Moroccan, remained in the running, but the Arab had just missed his twenty-third shot, so if I killed the next bird, Mr. White would win his money, Anna would be proud of me, and I'd win a little prize money. If I missed the bird, then the remaining competitor and I would continue shooting, till one of us prevailed, but Mr. White would still be

out his $500. In 1960, $500 had significantly greater value, than it does today. Comparatively speaking, it was about like betting $10,000, now. *I can't let Mr. White down!* There was no doubt Mr. White would tell my Dad about this situation, and I worried about what my Dad would think, if I missed. Standing on home-plate, the button man, who always stood behind the me, politely asked if I was ready, and at first, I wasn't.

My heart was pounding hard against the underside of my sternum. *I should have sipped more booze.* To try to calm down a tad, I took a couple of deep breaths, as Mr. White had previously advised me, but they didn't seem to help. *What is wrong with me?* Standing there, gun in hand, I hesitated, but then I thought about my fearless Dad, who'd flown combat missions in the Pacific, strafing and dropping bombs, while being shot at by the enemy, and even being shot down, and there I was, at a luxurious shooting club, and my only worry was whether or not I'd successfully shoot a pigeon; as a result, my fear transformed into shame, as I realized how ridiculous I was, ergo my anxiety vanished, and I was ready. *I'm just shooting a stupid bird, that can't shoot back… big deal!* I hoped that what was left of the two

bourbons was still slowing my reflexes to a manageable level, and it hadn't worn off. Even today, there are many things I can do better after a couple of drinks: bullet chess, writing, explaining some things, tolerating boring people, doing menial tasks, etc.

Focusing my attention on the five metal boxes, I uttered the word, "pajaro," and so the button man pushed the button, and that's when time did its eerie slow-down thing. While raising the weapon and pushing the gun's butt-plate into my shoulder, the walls of the middle box began collapsing outwardly, exposing the white feathers of an extremely frenetic racing pigeon. Instantly, the bird was flushing out its wings, while squatting down to make its' skyward leap. As it jumped, the fully extended wings pulled downward, cupping, and grabbing the air, thereby propelling the fowl skyward, head held aloft, as the small wooden ball narrowly missed its' stretched-out neck. All those things happened in the tiniest fraction of time. *This slow-motion is so cool!* Most likely the slow-motion, meant that the two bourbons were no longer an adequate match for my flood of adrenaline. *It's been too long since the last drink.* Swiveling the muzzle to get a bead on the bird, I was looking for a

clue as to the direction the creature was taking, and preparing myself to lead the freakishly fast mass of snowy feathers. Suddenly, I perceived the bird's head turn, and I knew the direction it was committing to, and I shifted the gun, accordingly. The muzzle of the gun had reached the position, just ahead of the high speed wings, and my finger depressed the trigger, with the corresponding deafening boom, and the recoil violently shoving into my shoulder. At first, I thought I'd missed, because there wasn't the customary cloud of feathers, but evidently enough BBs had hit home, for the pigeon had scarcely traveled three feet, before it folded its' wings, arced-over, and crashed back to the grass. The body laid unmoving on its side, apparently dead. *It couldn't have been a quicker shot.* Only two tiny feathers had come loose to settle back to the ground.

As I turned around to look for Anna's and Mr. White's approval, I had not yet thumbed the shotgun's unlocking lever to break open the chamber, yet I had lowered the weapon from my shoulder. One live shell remained in the weapon, and all that was required in order to fire the second shot was to again squeeze the same trigger. I exhaled a sigh of relief. Turning my head to the left, still I kept the gun safely

pointed down range, toward the downed bird. In the glare of the sun, stood Anna and Mr. White, smiling, and nodding their heads, thereby confirming my kill, and so at that moment, all seemed to be right with the world, then suddenly Mr. White's eyes narrowed, looking past me toward the bird. He frowned and had barely begun to lift his arm to extend and point his hand. At the same instant, Anna was pressing her palms to her cheeks, as if something was wrong. These abrupt changes in Mr. White and Anna could only mean that the bird was getting back-up to take flight. Evidently, I was wrong to assume that the first shot had done the job. *Oh, no!* I had seen this mistake made by other shooters, who had presumed that the bird was dead, when it was only temporarily stunned. *If the bird flies, and clears the perimeter fence, Mr. White will be out $500!* Since I knew that I didn't have time to turn back around, before the swift little fowl made good its escape, I had no choice but to point the gun and fire, without looking or shouldering the weapon. There just wasn't time, so I hurriedly just pointed the weapon, blindly imagining where the bird's position might be. The aim was only a guess, at best. The mercurial pigeon was far too fast to afford me the luxury of a second look, a legitimate aim, so I just made a guess, tightened my grasp, as I

instinctually fired.

My head was still in the process of swiveling back around, when the gun violently discharged. It was hard to maintain a grip on the unsouldlered weapon. The blast thrust the gun violently backwards, passed my right hip. The second barrel of the *Browning* possessed a slightly wider barrel opening, a modified choke, meaning that the pattern of the shot was going to be a little bit more spread-out, slightly more encompassing. As the gun roared-out for the second time, and my vision came back around, I shockingly caught sight of the bird retrieval man! Unbeknownst to me, with the first shot, he'd hurriedly dashed out onto the field to retrieve the bird. *Oh, shit!* A feeling of dread swept over me, and a sickening cold sweat popped-out on my skin. The man's arm was reaching-out for the bird, as it again took flight. When the gun fired, the bird was two feet off the ground, and only inches from his open outstretched fingertips. Just like me, the bird retrieval man had incorrectly assumed that the bird had been killed by the first shot.

Adrenaline clarifies and preserves the associated memories.

Unfortunately, the poor man had suddenly darted out onto the shooting field, but unfortunately too quickly. His haste was no doubt due to his desire to impress those who'd hired him, that he was on the job, and doing his level best to quickly remove the apparent dead fowl. Employment at the shooting club was considered a real plum, for the impoverished men of southern Spain. The club only hired males to work during the shoots, doing such things as: cooking, waiting tables, bartending, groomed the grass on the pigeon range, building maintenance, etc. This all male employment was in response to the fact that the male customers often brought their mistresses and prostitutes. The women employees only came-in after the shoots were over, to do the cleaning, when the customers and hookers were gone.

At that close range, a direct hit of birdshot would have easily blown a hole through the bird retrieval man, or at minimum removed his outstretched hand, but as fate would have it, the bird was instantly blown into a swirl of white feathers, with a jolted lump of indiscernible crimson at its center. It was a

near perfect shot, and without looking. With the sound of the shot, the man had instantly pulled back his hand and carefully inspected it, then smiling, he held the uninjured hand aloft, to signal the spectators that he was okay. Luckily, not a single BB had touched him. The man then nodded to me. Thank God, the remaining bourbon had slowed me just enough, not to swing the gun's muzzle further, ergo I may have been saved by the booze. *I owe my life to bourbon.*

After a rather pregnant pause, a shout of approval rose-up from the onlookers. Shocked and relieved, I broke open the shotgun, and ejected the two empty cartridges. As the spent shell casings bounced onto the ground, I assumed I was about to catch a world of flack, for my reckless second shot. *What if I'd killed him, or destroyed his hand?* The thought struck home about how quickly, and without warning, life could change; that no matter how attentive and careful one strives to be, a cosmic ball of reeking horse manure can unexpectedly enter the atmosphere, and nail you square between the eyes. Suddenly, someone has been killed, and my life would be forever changed… flying off the rails, over the edge of the trestle, and into the bottomless

canyon of despair. *Dad may kill me, if he finds out about this!* But, as fate would have it, Dad never found-out. Apparently, Mr. White didn't tell him.

Alas, since the bird retrieval man was poor, he was chastised for having run out onto the field too quickly, yet nothing was said to me for firing my gun, without looking, for very nearly killing a man. This social inequality and obvious injustice was owing to the fact that I was considered to be a member of the privileged class, a prime example of financial tyranny. Everyone at the shoot behaved as if I had done nothing wrong, and yet I'd very nearly shot an innocent man. Perchance, had I killed the man, nothing would have been said, other than to tell me that the man had run out on the field too quickly.

I wanted to buy the man a drink or a plate of food, but the prevailing customs, demanded that the classes be kept separate, that I didn't offer so much was an apology. It would have been considered 'bad form,' and such behavior could easily get you banned from the shooting club, and I'd already been reprimanded by Mr. White about talking to the old veterans in the woods. A second such miss-step and I might not have been allowed to return to the club.

Mr. White was giving me the thumbs-up, and Anna winked, then she turned to go back inside the club. She lived in fear of anyone finding-out about us; whereas, I only worried about my parents finding-out, but especially my highly religious Mom.

I went to the bartender, ordered and paid for a medicinal double, and included a twenty dollar bill to be covertly slipped to the bird retrieval man. The bartender already knew what had happened, because Anna had told him. Considering that the bird-man worked for seven cents an hour, the twenty dollars was a minor windfall. The socially aware bartender secretly delivered the cash. I knew this to be true, since the bird retrieval man gave me a brief covert nod, when I saw him the following weekend. I often wondered what would have transpired, if I'd killed the bird retrieval man. So many of life's successes and failures, are predicated on things beyond our control; just the unpredictable arrangement of neurons firing, one moment before they stimulate or inhibit the next set of neurons, thereby creating the next moment of reality, the time that we all refer to as, 'now.' The muzzle of the gun would probably have only had to travel another tenth of one degree of arc, a hundredth of a second of additional

movement to have resulted in a disaster. One degree of additional swing, and the bird man's life and mine would have radically changed.

In those days, I thought of booze as my friend, yet soon its' absence would become my worst nightmare. I was done with shooting that day. It was time to drink, and to ride home with Mr. White.

After nearly shooting the bird retrieval man, I needed to take a beat, and so as stated, I headed inside for a drink. At the bar, I briefly glanced at Anna, and she covertly held-up her thumb and index finger about a half-inch apart, indicating that it had been a close call for the bird retrieval man. It seems like she was the only person, who sensed my concern; still, when next I went to her house, she talked on and on about that particular shot, praising me for the accuracy. I got the feeling she delighted in the event; in fact, it was easy to tell she sexually enjoyed talking about the violence. It was clear she wanted me to enjoy it, too. That day, I stayed with her a couple more hours than usual. Prior to writing this, Anna and Mr. White were the only people, with whom I discussed this event concerning the bird retrieval man. Certainly, there was no talking about the bird retrieval man with my parents. To do so

would have ended my going to the pigeon shoots. Evidently, Mr. White didn't mention the near miss, either.

Before the club closed that evening, the bartender happily doled-out my prize money, because he knew that custom dictated he receive a generous tip, for having done so. It was supposedly good luck to tip the bartender, and that was probably the bartender's idea. Even though, I had won a big prize, I felt no pleasure, and still felt foolish for having worried about the aforementioned pressure about making the shot. Right then, I just wanted my therapeutic bourbon. I took my prize money and bourbon, and went to the bathroom, locked the stall door, sat down on the commode with my pants still up, and sipped my double. Besides contemplating that I'd very nearly killed the bird retrieval man, I also considered that the prize money would better enable me to afford Anna's weekly gifts, for some time to come.

Once I finished my bourbon, I came out of the restroom, and purchased a single for the ride home. Neither the club, nor Mr. White, cared about my taking the glass with me. Styrofoam existed then, but to the best of my knowledge, there were as yet no

styrofoam to-go cups. Now, styrofoam seems to be omnipresent, especially for ice chests and various food containers. The light weight cheap material is well known for releasing various highly toxic materials, and dangerous amounts, if you heat your food in it. Perhaps, the most pernicious of those chemicals is styrene, linked to: cancer, vision and hearing issues, memory and concentration problems, as well as various other nervous system problems. But who really cares, since styrofoam is mostly used by the poor? Aren't those styrofoam cups in your local convenience stores?

That unforeseen shooting fiasco was one of the more memorable aspects of my muddled alcoholic childhood. In various ways, I didn't have a normal youth, and in some manner that may be a good thing. Still, there's something to be said for having the customary upbringing, and the quintessential dating life; at least, according to many psychological experts (if there are such people), but then in my opinion, most of those shrinks have at least one loose screw. If my beautiful daughter is blessed, as she deserves to be, she'll have a normal dating life, and find a good man, who desperately loves her; perhaps, a man somewhat like my Dad, with his bold courage,

and unshakeable integrity, yet hopefully someone who doesn't scream in his sleep, yet still has a sense of humor. But above all else, I hope he has a few crooked teeth, just like my extremely fine Dad.